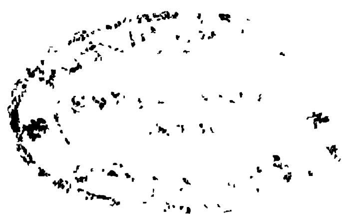
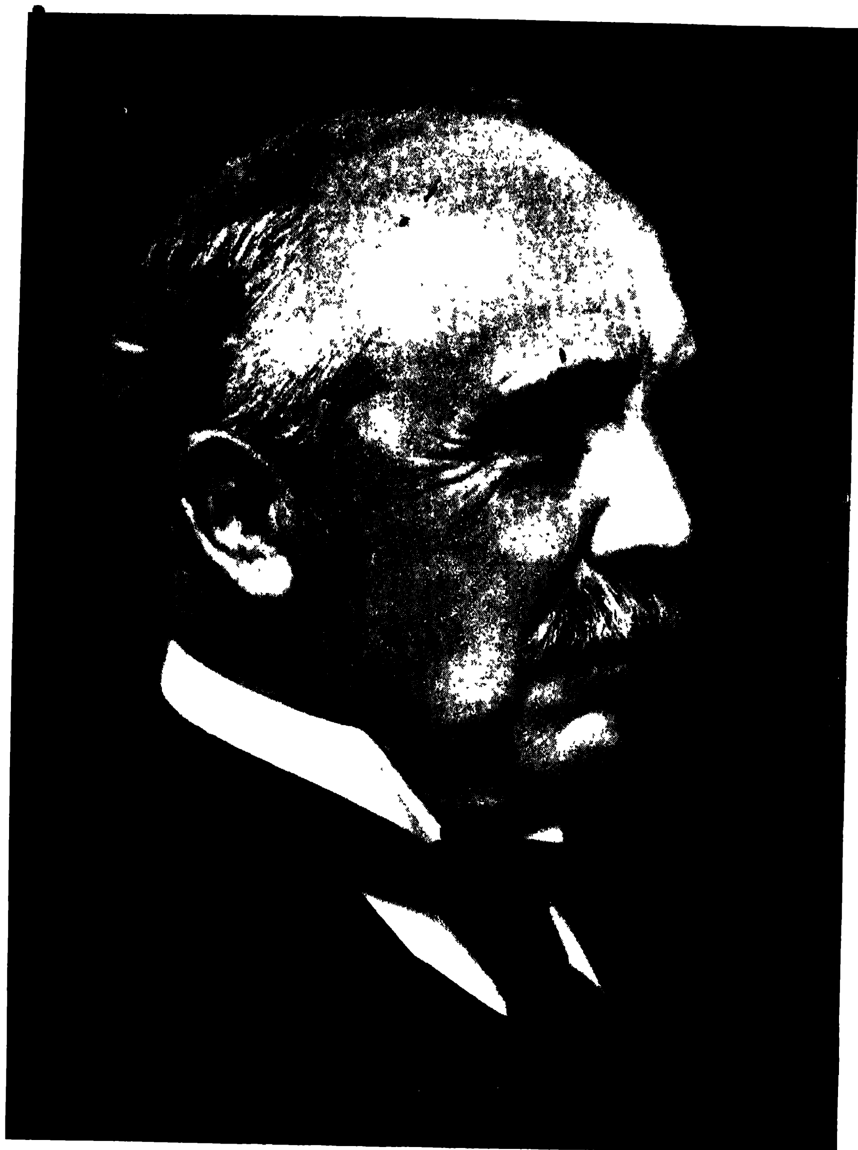
SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN





SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

(From the photograph by Beresford, published by the Liberal Publication Department)

Frontispiece, Vol. II.

THE LIFE OF
THE RIGHT HON. SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN, G.C.B.

BY

J. A. SPENDER

IN TWO VOLUMES
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CHAPTER XXII

LIBERAL UNITY AND CONSERVATIVE REACTION

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE FISCAL CAMPAIGN

CHAPTER XXIV

THE 'STARVING TWELVE MILLIONS'

CHAPTER XXV

HOPES DEFERRED

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST VICISSITUDES

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LIBERAL TRIUMPH

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHAPTER XXX

THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FIRST SESSION

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF LADY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LORDS AND THE EDUCATION BILL

CHAPTER XXXIV

A DIFFICULT SESSION

CHAPTER XXXV

THE HOUSE OF LORDS QUESTION

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FINAL RALLY

CHAPTER XXXVII

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONCLUSION

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER XIX

CONTINUED CROSS-CURRENTS

Speech on Colonial Office Vote—The Cape Constitution under Lock and Key—Speech at Peckham—More about Concentration Camps—To Marienbad—The *Spectator's* Charges—Unwelcome News from Home—Return to London—Forebodings—A Change in Public Opinion—Campaigning in Scotland—Many Speeches—The Offending Phrase repeated—Continued Cross-currents—Lord Rosebery's Reappearance—The Chesterfield Speech—South African Policy and the Clean Slate—An Overture for Peace—The Berkeley Square Interview.

FAITHFUL to his time-table, Campbell-Bannerman left London on July 20 and escorted his wife as far as Frankfort on the way to Marienbad. But for once he departed from his almost invariable practice, and, leaving her to go on alone, returned quickly to London to see the session out. The absent, as he had more than once discovered, are nearly always wrong, and he was not quite comfortable in his mind as to what might happen if pro-Boers and Imperialists exercised their charter of free speech while he was not there to speak for himself. The Colonial Office vote, which was taken on August 2, was recognised as the first test of the provisional unity established at the Reform Club meeting, and the debate on it proved to be a kind of rehearsal of the themes repeated by the two sections on their respective platforms during the autumn and winter. Campbell-Bannerman, supported undoubtedly by the 'four-fifths,' boldly took the line of declaring the necessity of prolonging the war to be at least unproven, and vigorously challenged the exceptional repressive measures to which the Government was more and more being driven. The Liberal Imperialists on the whole supported the Government,

CHAP. XIX. 1901. and generally defended its measures as an unpleasant necessity, while occasionally criticising them in detail. For the most part they refrained from attacking Campbell-Bannerman, and seldom mentioned him by name in their speeches, but he felt that he was being shadowed, and during the next few months it caused him a certain irritation that he could seldom or never make a speech without being followed and inferentially criticised by a member of his own party. Lord Rosebery had not exaggerated when he spoke of the 'Liberal throne' as 'the most uneasy that had existed since the partition of Poland.'

He spoke his mind freely to the House of Commons on August 2, and gave his critics a full opportunity of declaring him unregenerate and impenitent :—

I never doubted what the result of the war would be and I do not at this moment, but what I have been much more concerned about is the condition of things in South Africa that would be left after the war, and every important criticism—if any of my criticisms have been important—has turned upon that point. I take, for instance, the whole line of policy, military policy, so-called, involved in the devastation of territory, in the burning of farms, in the clearing of the country as it is called, and the sweeping of the people into camps ; I have again and again said that much may be said for it, and I can quite believe it. From the point of view of immediate military necessity, with the apparent object of shortening the war, I can imagine that much can be said for it ; but everything in the world can be said against it from the political point of view, because by pursuing that course you are only laying up a fund of ineradicable personal hatred which will far exceed in intensity the political antipathy which existed before and which in all conscience was bad enough.

He wound up by declaring that so far as Cape Colony was concerned, the Constitution was 'under lock and key,' as it certainly was. Mr. Chamberlain replied, as usual, with a slashing attack, alleging in particular that the Liberal leader was indifferent to the misconduct of the enemy ; and Sir Edward Grey made it clear that he was, on the whole, on Mr. Chamberlain's side, not disputing the necessity of

the Concentration Camps or the need of more severe measures if the Boers prolonged their resistance. He warned the Government, however, against making martyrs by indiscriminate capital punishment.

A few days later (Aug. 7) Campbell-Bannerman addressed a sympathetic and enthusiastic audience at Peckham, and was much cheered by finding himself among friends who had no reservations. His speech was mainly concerned with London questions, but he found an opportunity of hammering in his familiar South African moral—that we were not engaged in a punitive expedition, or, as occasionally in India, chastising some insubordinate tribe, but fighting with men who were to be our fellow-subjects, ' flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of the majority of the inhabitants of the old Colonies.' It was, therefore, of the highest importance to create as little ill-will as possible, and, if we could, to ' make even the stern necessities of war minister to conciliation.' ' That,' he said, ' is why I have denounced and, heaven helping me, will continue to denounce, all this stupid policy of farm-burning, devastation, and the sweeping of women and children into camps. If some military advantage is gained by these proceedings, and I can quite imagine that in some cases there is a military advantage, it is grievously outweighed by the political disadvantages. They say it is all done in the interests of humanity ; but, if so, why are many features in it withdrawn as soon as they are brought to public notice ? ' The question was pertinent, and, whatever storm he had brought about his own head, he had the satisfaction of knowing that the reform of the Concentration Camps was now being seriously taken in hand, and that a Ladies Committee,[1] appointed by the Government, was on its way to South Africa for this special purpose.

[1] This Committee consisted of Lady Knox, Mrs. Fawcett, Miss Lucy Deane (Inspector of Factories), Dr. Jane Matherston, and Miss Brereton. The War Office, however, definitely refused to include Miss Emily Hobhouse, who had been chiefly instrumental in raising the question, and who had been one of Campbell-Bannerman's informants.

CHAP. XIX.

II

1901. Leaving the last days of the session to his colleagues, Campbell-Bannerman rejoined his wife at Marienbad on the 14th, and there remained till the third week in September. His repose was broken in the last days of August by the allegation of the *Spectator* that he had been influenced as a member of the South African Committee by Mr. Rhodes's contribution of £5000 to the Liberal Party Funds. With that he dealt decisively, as recorded in a previous chapter.[1] His wife's health was now his first and main thought, and he troubled about little else until the time came to turn home.

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Herbert Gladstone

MARIENBAD, *Sept.* 12, '01.—I feel somewhat as an animal must when its hibernation is over. We have had a delightful time here until about a week ago, when it became cold and broken weather; and everyone is wondering whether the break is for good and all, or whether we shall have all the finer an autumn because of this bad moment.

The main thing with me is that—*Dieu soit loué*—my wife is better than she has been for months, and I have really hopes that an end is coming to her pains, although she will still be very susceptible and must take care. Our faith in high, dry air, these waters, and *Austrian medical practice*, is confirmed.

We have had few English here—30 or 40 perhaps—only two M.P.'s (Lockwood and McCalmont) and these are all gone. Luckily there were some charming French people, who furnished us with civilised society.

In our little political world at home things appear to have been quiet on the surface, whatever movement there may have been underneath. We have had the benefit of instruction by Mr. Sidney Webb, and survived it. I recognise in his lucubrations admirable sentiments which I have heard enunciated by other and greater men: which may be master and which scholar I do not know. I fear I am too old to join that Academy.

The Lanarkshire seat is a mess, and must go its own way. I do not at all like a pure English coming down and capturing a

[1] See *supra*, vol. i. pp. 202-6.

seat, or even a hold upon a constituency—but if my countrymen like it, what can be done? [1]

As to my own programme of events I have put off Plymouth till the beginning of December, and Leicester (with perfect concurrence, apparently, of the local people) to February. I have Stirling on 25th October as my opening, then the other places in my constituency sprinkled over the next few weeks: then Lancaster on (I think) 26th November.

The old war appears to rub along in the accustomed style. I wish Kitchener would not in a despatch speak of the 'total bag' consisting of 67 Boers killed, so many wounded, so many cattle and rounds of ammunition, etc., etc.

Of course it will be all over in three days now! F. C. G. and his flycatcher is excellent.

I hope you have been enjoying yourself, and I have no doubt you have, with your new interest—so much better in every way than beastly politics!

We leave this on Saturday, and shall pass a fortnight somewhere in the mountains, if weather decent, and if not wanted home.

The next fortnight was spent not in the mountains but in Vienna and Salzburg, where the 'beastly politics' followed him. The news from home was not cheerful. His Scottish correspondents reported a new activity on the part of the Imperialist wing in the constituencies and what looked like a concerted attempt to get candidates of their complexion accepted. This touched him very closely and ran counter to his idea of the compact between the two sections which he always interpreted as barring hostilities in the constituencies. By the 19th of September he was very reluctantly 'working homewards,' 'filled with forebodings of what he would find on his return.' 'Things seem to me to be worse and worse,' he writes to his chairman from Vienna. 'I have purposely refused all meetings until after my own constituents have been spoken to. This will be at Stirling on October 25, and Dunfermline on some convenient day a week or ten days later. Before that, certain

[1] The North-East Lanarkshire by-election took place on Sept. 26, when Sir W. H. Rattigan (C.) won the seat hitherto Liberal through a Liberal and Labour split, Mr. Cecil Harmsworth standing as Liberal candidate and Mr. R. Smillie (I.L.P.) as Labour candidate.

CHAP. XIX. 1901. of my "friends" will speak. Hitherto, they have been intriguing hard: the question is, will they come out with any new truths or doctrines? We shall see! I have done all that mortal could do to avoid a split—but if it must come, it will be faced.' A fortnight later he was back in London, and the outlook certainly seemed no happier when viewed from home than from abroad. He writes again to his chairman:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. William Robertson

6 GROSVENOR PLACE, *Oct.* 5, '01.—I do not wonder that you are a little puzzled. I have only just arrived, and have seen no one: and although I know something of the machinations of the active gentlemen you refer to, I have not much information.

Asquith's meeting in Edinburgh and Grey's in Glasgow I agreed to before I left. They were going to speak anyway, and it was thought that by having their meetings under the auspices of the S.L.A. we kept them within bounds. This is good policy if a split can be avoided: the question is, can it? I have not quite found the answer to this question and am waiting to hear what they say, as to which there has been no communication whatever with me. But in what I say myself I do not mean to disguise my opinions, and without going out of my way to attack them I will let it be seen and known what I think. I shall not see Sinclair till Wednesday next. I am going to see Harcourt and Morley before I leave London and will get them into co-operation.

Some of these forebodings happily proved unfounded, and in his speech at Edinburgh, Mr. Asquith passed lightly over Liberal differences and walked as far as possible on common ground.

III

It was, after all, not the speeches of Opposition leaders, and still less their differences, but events themselves, which were to decide this issue. The march of events in South Africa was altogether favourable to Campbell-Bannerman's main contentions. Before the end of September, it was evident that the special kinds of coercion on which the Government relied to bring the war to a close had failed,

as he predicted they would. In August Lord Kitchener had issued two proclamations, one threatening all burghers who remained on the field after September 15 with permanent banishment, the other announcing that the cost of maintaining the families of those who should not have surrendered would be made a charge upon their property in the two Colonies. The crucial date had come and gone without any sign of the expected result upon the fighting forces of the enemy. The Government were now beginning to sell the farms of the men in the field, and had sentenced ten men to banishment, apparently relying on their proclamations to legalise proceedings which were otherwise outside the law. A strong protest was immediately entered by lawyers of authority, including Mr. Asquith, who declared that, while he had assented to the Proclamation as a measure of expediency, he had done so on the clear understanding, endorsed by Mr. Balfour, that if there were any occasion to put its threat into force, these would need to be legalised by local legislation. Sound as this legal argument might be, it had no great practical importance, for the Boer States were controlled by Lord Milner and local legislation could be had for the asking. What Campbell-Bannerman challenged, and what a larger and larger number of the public agreed with him in challenging, was the policy and expediency of these measures. The origins of the war were in fact being forgotten in a new division of opinion between the unconditional surrender party and the peace by negotiation party, and in their zeal to support the Government against the pro-Boers some of the Liberal Imperialists were in danger of becoming more Ministerial than the Ministry. On this issue large numbers of Unionists, including (it was rumoured) a powerful section of the Cabinet, were of the Liberal leader's opinion, and agreed with him in thinking the refusal of honourable terms to be unworthy of Great Britain, and the interminable chasing of a gallant enemy who interminably evaded his pursuers both unnecessary and undignified. It was evidence of the change of opinion that newspapers which had hitherto been unsparing in their

denunciation of the Boers were beginning to speak of Botha and De Wet as 'good sportsmen,' and even to pay them the tribute of good-humoured applause when it was reported for the hundredth time that they had got away. Gradually the country was moving to the conclusion that the spirit of these men was not to be broken by any threat of exceptional penalties, and it was far from easy in its mind about both the wisdom and the necessity of many of the measures taken. When Lord Milner said at the end of October that 'in a formal sense the war might never be over,' there were many expressions of dissent in quarters wholly favourable to his policy.

Campbell-Bannerman set himself to his autumn speech-making with a strong conviction that the flowing tide was with him. Addressing his fellow-Scots at Stirling on October 25, he declared boldly that the party meeting had 'endowed him with an authority and imposed on him a responsibility' which would be present in every word he uttered. 'I confidently appeal to you,' he went on, 'and to true Liberals throughout the country to do all you can to restrain the tendency towards exaggeration of differences, and even in some cases the manufacture of differences, in order that the common stock of the intellect and the moral energy of the party may be brought to bear upon the public duty which our traditions, as well as our convictions, impose upon us.' That duty, as he conceived it, was first of all, after asserting our military authority, to bring the war to a close in an honourable way by impressing on our antagonists our 'ultimate and essential friendliness' to them. Then once more he repeated his notorious phrase :—

Where are the elements to be found for a settlement in the condition to which you have now reduced South Africa ? The whole country in the two belligerent States outside the mining towns is a howling wilderness. The farms are burned, the country is wasted. The flocks and the herds are either butchered or driven off ; the mills are destroyed, furniture and implements of agriculture are smashed. These things are what I have termed methods of barbarism. I adhere to the phrase. I cannot

improve upon it. If these are not the methods of barbarism what methods did barbarism employ? No, sir. Of course, in particular cases, where some offence has been committed against right dealing, let punishment be enforced, and in time of war things are not done in a rosewater way; but the universal treatment of a whole country in this way, and the sweeping of women and children into camps, is a process for which I venture to say nothing can furnish justification.

These meetings greatly encouraged him, so he wrote to Lord Ripon:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

BELMONT, *Oct.* 30, '01.—I was very glad to receive your letter, some words of which, applying to the Cape Colony, I quoted with good effect at Stirling. I am glad to report to you well of the general feeling in Scotland. It is a great change since last year; and last week nothing could have exceeded the friendly enthusiasm with which I was received, or the sympathy expressed even for extreme views of the war. The revolt of our 'Lib. Imps.'—the *chartered* Company as I call them—has failed; and, for the present, things go well.

But how painful to be obliged to set oneself against one's most intimate colleagues! I avoided any personal references but the drift of all that one says is understood, and I do not see how frank co-operation can be resumed after this projected mutiny.

. . . .

All my information is to the effect that our friend at Dalmeny is not with Asquith, Grey and Co., that he condemns unconditional surrender and would offer terms. Why does he not speak out, if this is so?

He pursued the South African theme at Plymouth, at Bath, at Lancaster and among his own constituents, perpetually repeating what he had said about the Concentration Camps, and declining to abate one word of his condemnation. This obduracy brought fierce retorts, and all through the autumn and winter the stream of denunciation poured unceasingly on his head from press and platform. He was prolonging the war, encouraging the Boers, and slandering the Army. Every post brought him abusive letters: 'Sir,' wrote an Episcopalian clergyman, signing his name and

CHAP. XIX. 1901. dating from his parsonage, 'you are a cad, a coward and a murderer, and I hope you will meet a traitor's or a murderer's doom.' The party situation was certainly no easier. Liberal Imperialists complained that he had yielded nothing for the sake of peace. Mr. Asquith had opened the autumn campaign with a studiously moderate speech at Edinburgh in October, and he had replied by repeating 'methods of barbarism.' Sir Edward Grey redressed the balance with a speech at Glasgow (Nov. 28), warmly defending Lord Milner, and expressing an emphatic opinion that 'very little could be done by negotiations.' Other members of the group significantly declared that no war had ever been conducted with such careful and scrupulous regard for humanity, and, while endorsing the idea of self-government as the ultimate object, laid stress on the need of an intervening period in which the country would settle down under British guidance. The public judged rightly that these eminent people were talking at each other from essentially opposite camps, and, when December came, their differences seemed to be wider and more irreconcilable than at any moment since the beginning of the war.

IV

But another diversion was now at hand. Early in November it was announced that, in view of the serious position of national affairs, Lord Rosebery had felt it incumbent on him to accept the invitation of the Chesterfield Liberal Association to address them in the month of December. The date—December 16—was still remote when rumours of the exceptional importance of the coming speech began to go abroad. The solitary ploughman was going to turn another furrow—entirely his own: something was to be said which would give the lead the country wanted, and deliver it from the dismal plight in which the politicians of all parties had landed it. Lord Rosebery himself maintained a modest reserve, but, the ball having been set rolling, nothing could stop it, and the speech had become an event a full month before it was delivered. The clubs

hummed with it, the newspapers were full of it, and 'well-informed' correspondents poured out a continuous stream of intelligent and contradictory anticipations. Lord Rosebery, though in the public eye the prophet of Liberal Imperialism, had remained in closer touch with the other wing of the party than most of his colleagues, and men of all schools betook themselves to Berkeley Square to offer advice. He heard them with the respectful patience of a judge listening to counsel and sent them away without a hint of what his judgment would be. A week before the event he went into seclusion, leaving the whole country on the tiptoe of expectation. All parties were now agreed, and Ministerialists not less than Liberal Imperialists and pro-Boers, that whatever Lord Rosebery might say, the Chesterfield speech was going to be 'momentous.'

It was a severe test, and it says much for the power and ability of the speaker that for once expectation was not disappointed. The speech, delivered from a platform which was thronged with the leaders of the Imperialist group, was in substance a powerful plea for a negotiated peace. Having entered his 'earnest protest' against the 'unfortunate remark' of Lord Milner that in the formal sense of the word the war might never be at an end, 'I believe,' he said, 'in the stern, efficient, vigorous prosecution of the war to its natural end, but I believe that its natural end is a regular peace and a regular settlement—not unconditional surrender or interminable hunting down of an enemy proclaimed outlaws and rebels.' In a very skilful passage he went on to suggest not that the Government should make overtures, but that it should be ready to listen to overtures from any responsible authority, more especially any that might reach it from the exiled Government, 'which now exists somewhere in the Low Countries, and which surrounds ex-President Kruger.' 'Some of the greatest peaces, the greatest settlements in the world's history, have begun with an apparently casual meeting of two travellers in a neutral inn, and I think it might well happen that some such fortuitous meeting might take place under the auspices

of His Majesty's Government and of the exiled Boer Government which might lead to very good results.'

What he advised, he went on to explain, was not an active but a passive policy of peace. It was useless and would probably be mischievous to make overtures to the men in the field, and nothing was to be gained by further defining the terms to be offered, for in spite of the fact that the terms offered in the previous March had been formally revoked, the Boers, who were a shrewd race, were perfectly well aware that in case they wished for peace those terms were still open to them. Coming to details he said he was not in favour of the recall of Lord Milner—since that would be regarded by all the loyalists as a hauling down of the flag—or of sending a High Commissioner for the special purpose of making peace and resettling the country. The Boers, he said significantly, could make peace with Lord Kitchener. But he was for 'as large and liberal an amnesty as it was possible to give'—barring a few exceptional cases 'which do not fall within the rules of warfare'—and for giving 'full civil rights to all Boers who took and signed a definite and drastic oath of allegiance.' For representative Government it would be necessary to wait until the farms were rebuilt and the country was resettled and once more inhabited, but in the interval he would not have an elaborate form of Government, but 'four or five rough and ready administrators of the Indian type to settle the country in the name of the High Commissioner, Lord Milner, and he would associate with them a Committee on which there should be a Boer.' Then he would 'hasten as soon as possible the era at which responsible Government could be offered.' With regard to all transactions which involved money, such as the resettlement of the farmers, the restocking of the farms, the rebuilding of the farm-houses, he would act with the most lavish liberality.

This on the question of the hour was the essence of the speech, but it was brilliantly and provokingly annotated with a running comment of rebuke and criticism which seemed skilfully contrived to please and irritate all parties.

The orthodox Liberals were advised to clean their slate and put away their 'fly-blown phylacteries'; the Government and the Unionist Party were arraigned for their mishandling of the situation in South Africa before the war, and Mr. Chamberlain taken to task for his crude and tactless plunging into foreign affairs. The electioneering of 1900 was vigorously denounced, and the Government sharply told that if any body of men were responsible for the prolongation of the war it was those who announced that every Liberal who was returned to Parliament was returned as a pro-Boer, and thereby gave the impression that a large body of Liberals had been elected to represent Boer ideas and advance the Boer policy in Parliament. The current fable that there was 'no alternative government' was ridiculed: 'The nation,' he said, 'which cannot produce an alternative to the present Government is more fit to control allotments than an Empire.' He thought the phrase of his old friend about methods of barbarism an 'unhappy' one, but he subscribed to the Derby resolution about the Concentration Camps.[1]

It was a speech, as was said at the time, in which 'everybody found something, and nobody everything, that he wanted.' But its effect was undeniable. It seemingly performed the miracle of uniting the extremest sections of the Liberal Party so far as South Africa was concerned. Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey said that it exactly expressed their thought; Mr. Lloyd George found in it a reflection of his own mind. The *Spectator* called upon Lord Rosebery to summon the Liberal Party and proclaim himself their leader, and had he struck when these irons were hot he might have recovered the position from which he abdicated in 1896. Instead of striking, he vanished from the scene, so far as the war was concerned, and

[1] Passed at the meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation at Derby on Dec. 4: 'That this Committee deplores the terrible rate of mortality among the women and children in the Concentration Camps, a state of affairs which must render more and more difficult the attainment of any permanent peace in South Africa, and urges upon the Government that immediate steps be taken at whatever cost to remedy the present condition of the camps.'

CHAP. XIX. 1901. left the two sections to start a new controversy about the interpretation of his speech, and its endorsement or otherwise of their respective contentions. The Liberal Imperialists pointed out that he had insisted on the retention of Lord Milner; their opponents retorted that he had proposed to take the administration of the Boer States out of Lord Milner's hands and advised the Boers to negotiate with—Lord Kitchener. The one remarked that he had rebuked Sir Henry for 'methods of barbarism'; the other replied that he had called him an 'old friend,' and endorsed the Derby resolution which condemned the Concentration Camps. The quarrel raged through the Christmas season and on into the New Year, and was pursued with all the subtlety of theologians disputing over a sacred text.

To Campbell-Bannerman the speech was a mixture of good and bad. He confided his impressions to the Chief Whip:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Herbert Gladstone

BELMONT, *Dec.* 18, '01.—. . . I have your meditations upon Chesterfield. I agree that the views on peace and war go very far and are not unreasonable, though it is unfortunate that they run counter to the very two things our people in the country care most about—Milner and Camps. I also agree that Aaron, K.C., and Sir E. Hur, who were there to hold up the prophet's hands, must have held up their own at some of the things they were expected to swallow and did swallow with avowed gratitude. So far good.

All that he said about the clean slate and efficiency was an affront to Liberalism and was pure claptrap. Efficiency as a watchword! Who is against it? This is all a mere rechauffé of Mr. Sidney Webb, who is evidently the chief instructor of the whole faction.

It is not unfavourable to the chance of unity on the war and peace issue: but ominous of every horror in general politics, if it is meant seriously. However, we can talk this over.

What is a 'fly-blown phylactery'?

Fly-blow is the result of a fly laying the egg from which maggots come in meat: no fly out of Bedlam would choose a phylactery (if he found one) for such a purpose.

In the main, however, he recognised that what Lord Rosebery had said at Chesterfield was closely in accord with what he himself had been saying in the country, and he decided that it was his duty to make a further effort to heal the breach. It was from all public points of view a gain that Lord Rosebery should be able to steal the horse and be applauded by the great mass of people who cried 'pro-Boer' and 'stop thief' to others who only looked over the hedge. And if the Liberal Imperialists, as they now said, agreed with the Chesterfield doctrine and were willing to join their fellow-Liberals in giving effect to it, there was surely at length no obstacle to their complete unity on the one and only question which mattered for the moment.

Holding these views, he let it be known that he intended to act upon them. Many of his friends had serious misgivings. Sir William Harcourt predicted failure and discomfiture, and pointed to the high language in which Lord Rosebery had disclaimed allegiance to any party. Others were alarmed lest the enterprise should succeed, and Campbell-Bannerman find his own position seriously challenged by the return of Lord Rosebery to the councils of the party. About that he was honestly indifferent. A real disinterestedness and an honest lack of ambition caused him instinctively to reject all counsels which looked to his own personal fortunes. No one who saw him in these days can possibly doubt that he was entirely sincere when he said, as he did repeatedly, that he was willing to serve under Lord Rosebery, provided always that the Liberal doctrine was not compromised. On the other hand, he was most emphatically not willing to have it said that his obduracy or personal vanity prevented reunion and the return of Lord Rosebery to active politics. He determined at all events to make it clear that *he* was not the obstacle.

Having made up his mind he went to the point with his usual directness, and finding himself in London before Christmas just called at Berkeley Square on a Sunday afternoon. Lord Rosebery was out, but responded by asking him to lunch the following day (Dec. 23). Of what happened

CHAP. XIX. 1901.

at that lunch a letter written to Mr. Bryce on Christmas Day gives his own version :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Bryce

6 GROSVENOR PLACE, *Dec.* 25, '01.—I thought the straightest thing was to see him and ask what he was up to. I told him that it was intolerable and mischievous that I and my friends should be held up to condemnation because we were unwilling to work with him. I told him flatly that there was no impediment on our side.

We talked for an hour in quite a friendly spirit.

The gist of it is this.

He acquiesces in the fact that there is little or nothing between us on the war. He is against severities, against the dogged policy, against Milner; has no hope of successful negotiations through him, '*I believe I could make peace to-morrow.*' *Has reasons for saying so.*

Will he then co-operate and consult? Impossible: left the Liberal party five years ago; is not 'in communion with you,' in ecclesiastical phrase.

Ireland is of itself enough to keep him away; is opposed to H.R. in any form; might agree to provincial Councils or Lower Committee of House of Commons—a legislative body never. If he spoke again, would devote his speech to this. Used all the old Unionist arguments.

When he said if appealed to, he would do all he could to help, what did he mean? It is from the country not from the Party that the appeal must come. Has no more to do or say: his cards are on the table. How is he going to play them? Had he seen the *Times*, saying that a speech, however fine, was no good? Does not read papers—as to war, was not aware what people had recently been saying; took his own line. No more speeches: far more importance attached to this one than he ever intended; will take an active part in H. of L.

Quite assented when I said there was nothing unfriendly to him among us except of course the one personal quarrel.

I should have said I tackled him about clean slate, shibboleths, etc. Explains that he only meant to be done with N. [Newcastle] programme. Would apply Liberal principles as occasion demanded or allowed. . . .

For good or evil there it is. The country does not know all this; thinks we are selfishly excluding a broad-minded

statesman. It may be very clever but it is diabolically unfair and mischievous.

A letter which I received from him a week later deals with the same occasion :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. J. A. Spender

LORD WARDEN HOTEL, DOVER, *Jan.* 1, '02.—You will have seen that we are not left to gnaw the bone of Chesterfield, but have to choose our food from a perfect banquet of imaginative gossip.

The truth as to my part is this. Being in London for a couple of days I thought it best to beard the Douglas in his halls. I had over an hour with him.

He won't rejoin: won't consult: won't do nuffin. Ireland would bar the way to rejoining, if nothing else: won't have H.R. in any form.

On war, admits substantial agreement with me: differences of form. Goes farther in private conversation in my direction even than in his public speech. But is out of the party. Won't say or do anything more at present.

We were most friendly, and he quite assents to the fact that I and my friends would gladly see him back.

This decision is confirmed by his refusing to lead in the Lords —advises that present arrangements should continue. K. [Kimberley] wished to give it up and S. [Spencer] wrote to R.

Then why should the public be told that a noble patriotic statesman would like to serve his country but certain selfish curmudgeons won't have him. I told him it was most unfair to allow this impression to prevail.

So there he is. But where are the acolytes?

Ronald F. [Ferguson] is making speeches calling on Liberals to elect between R. and me who are irreconcilably at variance on the war. Haldane tramps in his heavy way along the same path. I believe Grey also will follow it.

Will Asquith? I never hear anything of or from him.

With these elegant facts before me I am to make a speech for union on the 13th, and you may imagine how heartily I relish the prospect.

We have only got this length, being half-hearted as to going out of reach in such a fateful time and the weather being uninviting. I hardly think we shall cross the Channel, in any case Paris has become our utmost ambition. You are lucky to have

CHAP. XIX. 1901. blue skies and no crisis for your Yuletide on the Mediterranean shore and I hope you will return in great vigour.

I contemplate an amendment to the Address denouncing men who can neither conduct war nor make peace, but how will our Chesterfield converts relish it? Or will they have emigrated by that time?

There can be no doubt that these letters are an honest record of Campbell-Bannerman's impressions. But the effect which he produced upon Lord Rosebery, who also, and no doubt with equal honesty, confided his impressions to his friends, was somewhat different from what he supposed or intended. To Lord Rosebery he seemed to have made no definite proposal and suggested no concessions for the sake of unity. For whatever reason, it was evident to the friends of both that the two men had failed to understand each other, and that in spite of their apparent agreement about the next stage in South Africa, the obstacles to their co-operation were still serious.

CHAPTER XX

QUARRELS AND THEIR HEALING

A Gloomy Outlook—Questions to Lord Rosebery—Not a Band of Brothers—An Amendment which failed—The End of Smoothing—Lord Rosebery and the Clean Slate—Campbell-Bannerman's Answer—Definite Separation—Formation of the Liberal League—Mr. Asquith's Attitude—The Irish Question—' Step by Step ' Home Rule—Consternation of the Rank and File—Campbell-Bannerman's Objections to the League—Explanations from the Leaguers—A Dramatic Change—The Miracle of Unity—Introduction of the Education Bill and the Corn Tax—The Peace of Vereeniging—Speeches in Parliament—Harmony among the Leaders.

CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN had little cause for satisfaction at the beginning of the year 1902. The year just past had disappointed his hopes ÆT. 65. both of revival and of reunion. The by-elections had confirmed the verdict of 1900; the Opposition had made no progress in the House of Commons. Though the Government had provided abundant material for competent critics, its opponents had been too much absorbed in criticising each other to make effective use of it. Party feeling, said a wit, is the feeling which members of the same party have for one another, and the Liberal leaders seemed obstinately bent on justifying this epigram. The discovery of differences, where to the normal vision none existed, appeared to be an increasing obsession with some of them. Campbell-Bannerman had had a gleam of hope that the Chesterfield speech would heal the schism about the war. It seemed in all essentials so exactly in line with what he had been urging about the proper way of ending the war that he thought it impossible that the men who acclaimed it could pursue their differences with him. Once again he was disappointed. His appeal to Lord Rosebery had been fruitless,

CHAP. XX. 1902.

and his critics now proceeded to convert the Chesterfield speech into a new test of patriotic orthodoxy, and even to put it under a microscope to discover fresh grounds of quarrel. On New Year's Day it was published as a pamphlet with a preface in which its author observed that it appeared to have received a large meed of public approval, and appealed for 'spade-work' to prevent this 'wave of popular adhesion' from being 'lost in space'—the first hint of the new Imperialist propaganda which was to develop during the year. On the same day the Chief Whip wrote that he had received a letter from Sir Edward Grey declaring that he accepted Lord Rosebery's view of the South African question, but found it to be 'in vital conflict with Campbell-Bannerman's on four points—martial law, cruelties, offer of terms, Milner.' 'Nonsense, I need hardly say,' was his brief comment, but for once his usual equanimity forsook him. 'I must therefore confess and recant on all these,' he writes to Mr. Bryce, 'or Mr. Grey will repudiate my leadership. He finds it tragic to think what might have been the position of the party if Rosebery's view had been taken, and the anti-national tone suppressed.' His friends counselled patience and begged him not to be greatly disturbed if Sir Edward Grey should go the whole length of seceding. He was not easily disturbed about anything, but he knew that if secessions began it would be impossible to set limits to them, and he was the last man to underrate Sir Edward Grey's character and influence.

Such was the atmosphere in which he made his speech at the inaugural meeting of the London Liberal Federation at the St. James's Hall on January 13. His theme was Lord Rosebery, and he spoke with his usual directness. Clearing himself of the imputation that he was blocking the way to Lord Rosebery's return to political life, he declared that he had privately as well as publicly 'urged him to renew co-operation with his old friends, among whom he would be cordially welcomed.' He had thought it his duty, he said, to 'renew to him the expression of this feeling,' and he hoped that at least his 'powerful help' would be

given to the Liberal Party upon the most urgent of all questions—the re-establishment of peace—upon which he could find ' no potential difference ' between his own views and Lord Rosebery's. Then he put in a word about ' the lonely furrow ' :

I do not know how it may be elsewhere, but it is hard to see in this country how a public man can take an effective part in public life in detachment from all political parties. Shall I carry it a little further and ask, with all possible respect for him, whether a man of his experience, of his ability and of his influence has a right to adopt a position of isolation, whether it is profitable to the country that he should so adopt, so long as he remains in public life.

Addressing himself next to the four points of alleged vital difference, he contended that the differences were either unsubstantial or of little importance compared with the main points on which they were agreed. The great thing was that they should all stand together for the Liberal policy of peace against the policy of subjugation and unconditional surrender :

What is the desire of all of us for the future of South Africa ? Surely it is not only that there should be peace and freedom from the danger of internal hostilities throughout that vast future Dominion of the Crown : not only that equal rights should be established. . . . We want something more than that ; we want amity and close brotherhood between the races ; and this golden age can only be reached if the settlement is one between brave and friendly and mutually respectful foes, and not a mere surly and sulky submission to the conqueror. This is the way in which I believe the great mass of the Liberal Party look at the situation, taking it as it stands.

The speech was both ingenious and conciliatory, but it failed to soften the hearts of the dissentients. Mr. Asquith, who spoke the following night at Hanley, developed his argument in complete detachment from his leader, laid stress on ' convincing the Boers of the finality of the result and the hopelessness of ever renewing the struggle,' declared it to be all-important to ' do nothing to give the impression that you

are yielding from weakness or weariness or exhaustion,' and 'expedient not to recall or do anything to disparage the credit
1902. and authority of your agents, whether military or civil.' The acceptable policy was, in Mr. Asquith's opinion, 'a policy which ought to commend itself not only to the Liberal Party but to the whole country,' and in a rather pointed way he invited Liberal Unionists to respond to Lord Rosebery's appeal, and assured them that if they did so they would find that 'one great obstacle, or one of the greatest obstacles, had been removed to their entry or re-entry into the Liberal ranks.' There was a margin of doubt about the exact meaning of these words, but it could not be agreeable to Campbell-Bannerman that his principal lieutenant should apparently be appealing to political opponents to rally to Lord Rosebery and the policy of the 'clean slate.'

Evidently the Opposition front bench was not in a position to act as a band of brothers in the session now approaching. 'Whoever may propose the amendment to the Address, it will certainly not be Asquith,' he wrote to a friend early in January, and when Parliament met, on the 20th of the month, it was all too clear that the leaders were nearly at breaking-point. On the first day he was temperately inquisitive. Would the Government reveal the circumstances known to them but impossible to reveal to the public, which Lord Salisbury in his speech at the Guildhall had hinted at as justifying 'full and entire satisfaction' with the course of events in South Africa? Would they say what had happened to prevent the return of a considerable number of troops which Mr. Chamberlain had promised at the close of the winter campaign? Would they explain why the Cape Parliament had not been summoned and the Constitution of the Colony remained suspended, though, according to the official account, the country was safe and quiet? Having asked these questions he reserved himself for the debate on the amendment, but entered a vigorous protest against the policy of 'squeezing the Boers and "not fidgetting about negotiations" '—words attributed to Lord Milner in the latest cables from the Cape. He also had a

word to say about Ireland, and took the opportunity of nailing the green flag to the mast. 'The revival of coercion is the gravest domestic event of the year, and it is not a favourable accompaniment to a Land Bill. The contemplation of the Government, after all they had tried and done, after floundering in the old familiar ways between concession and coercion, is calculated to confirm us in our conviction of the wisdom of the policy towards Ireland and the Government of Ireland which has been and is the remedy approved by the Liberal Party.'

The usual recriminations followed, Mr. Balfour taunting Campbell-Bannerman with the popularity which his speeches enjoyed with the Boers, and barely concealing his satisfaction that the Liberal Party were unable to escape from the *damnosa hereditas* of an unpopular Irish policy. But these were preliminary skirmishes, and the real engagement took place the next day (Jan. 21) on the amendment which Mr. Cawley moved and Mr. McKenna seconded (with such approval as the leader could obtain from his colleagues), 'That this House, while prepared to support all proper measures for the effective prosecution of the war in South Africa, is of opinion that the course pursued by Your Majesty's Ministers and their attitude with regard to a settlement have not conduced to the early termination of the war and the establishment of a durable peace.' Front bench wisdom had evolved this formula in the hope that it would be accepted as a peace offering by the Liberal Imperialists and enable them for once to join forces in the same lobby with the centre and left wing. It seemed exactly to express the Chesterfield policy of sword and olive-branch in well-adjusted harmony. But the effect was lamentable. Mr. Chamberlain, departing for once from his usual style, drove into it with a suave irony which admirably succeeded in its object of setting the two wings of the Opposition by the ears. Campbell-Bannerman had loyal support from Mr. Bryce and Sir William Harcourt, but he was hotly attacked by the pro-Boers, and Mr. Lloyd George tore the official amendment to shreds, and held a crowded House

with mordant criticisms of his leader. 'In one breath,' he said, 'they declared that the war was unjust and then they
1902. turned to the Government and said, "unjust though it be, we will support you in prosecuting it." The Boers were said to be fighting for freedom and independence, and hon. members were invited to vote for shooting and capturing these Boers. He regretted that he could not accept that position. It meant that one set of gentlemen were asked to support what they regarded as a criminal enterprise, as an inducement to another set of gentlemen to vote for a proposition they did not believe to be true. One set of gentlemen were told that if they would vote what they considered was black to be white, another set of gentlemen would vote what they considered was white to be black. . . . His Rt. Hon. friend [Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman] had really gained nothing by this amendment. He had been induced to make a declaration about which he could not be very enthusiastic, he had been captured, and it was to be feared he had been treated by his captors as the Boers treated their prisoners—he had been stripped of all his principles and left in the veldt to find his way back the best he could. He hoped it would be a lesson to his Rt. Hon. friend.' Not one of the Liberal Imperialists came to the leader's rescue against this stinging rebuke,[1] and, when the division was called, Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, Mr. Haldane, and Mr. Munro-Ferguson absented themselves on the one side, and all the more prominent pro-Boers on the other. The latter, in the meantime, had voted for Mr. Dillon's amendment to the official amendment which would have taken out all that part of it which referred to 'the effective prosecution of the war.' The official amendment was lost by 333 to 123.

A man of less equable temperament might have regarded this debate and division as the crowning mortification, but Campbell-Bannerman was not even discouraged :—

[1] It was related that Campbell-Bannerman met Mr. Lloyd George in the Lobby the same evening and said cheerily, 'Well, are you feeling cooler now ?'

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

6 GROSVENOR PLACE, *Jan.* 24, '02.—On the whole I think we did well in the Division. ÆT. 65.

1. Grey (and I am sorry to say, Asquith) are much blamed in the party. Their excuse that Chamberlain's speech satisfied them will not stand investigation, and it is invalidated by the fact that they had first alleged that Salisbury's speech on the opening night satisfied them. They thus appear to have been gasping for any pretext possible to enable them to vote against, or escape from voting for, the amendment to which they had agreed.

Excellent article on this in last night's *Westminster Gazette.*

2. The Lib. Imps. being broken up is a good thing. Fowler was very cordial to me.

3. Lloyd George's outburst has greatly angered the party generally, and drove some of that wing—J. Morley and Channing, for instance—to vote for us.

I see nothing to regret in the whole thing. The centre of the party is enlarged and consolidated ; and, although you and I did not like the preamble, the amendment fairly puts forward a defensible and moderate policy. . . .

I do not think there will be any occasion soon for a formal council—so no question arises. But W. V. H. and J. M. dined with me on the eve of the Speech among the occupants of the Front Bench, and the Speaker is inviting them to our dinner: both of which events mark a change, for since they rode off into the wilderness they have not dined with us. This is all to the good.

II

It was perhaps a relief to him to recognise, as he did after these events, that his effort to find a formula to smooth the differences between the two wings of the party was at length exhausted. He had honestly tried to do his best within the limits of his own convictions. But he was too honest to conceal the fact that his sympathies were with the left wing and not with the right. In the first instance he had accepted the war as a lamentable necessity which had been forced upon us by the Kruger ultimatum—much as a client accepts litigation in which he has been involved by the bungling of his solicitors—but he strongly held that

CHAP. XX. 1902. its continuance in its later phases was due to the stubborn unwisdom which had refused the concessions that General Botha had asked for in his negotiations with Lord Kitchener. Not for a moment did he accept the plea that these negotiations had broken down because the Boers would accept nothing but complete independence. It was, in his view, inevitable that they should say so after the break-down, for any less spirited attitude would have been fatal to their fighting efficiency; but the fact that they said it offered no proof that a different handling of the negotiations, and especially the offer of an amnesty for the Cape rebels, would not have produced peace. Here in after years he was strongly confirmed both by Lord Kitchener and by General Botha. Lord Kitchener's views have been stated by his biographer,[1] and to the end of his life it remained General Botha's opinion that if the amnesty for which he asked had been conceded, he could have ended the war in March 1901 on practically the same terms as were negotiated in July of the following year.

That he had conceded too much instead of too little, that he should at all hazards have pressed his views on the negotiations of the previous year, was now Campbell-Bannerman's reflection, and he was resolved not to repeat this mistake. He would from henceforth speak his whole mind, and the party should take him or reject him on his own terms. The opportunity soon came. On February 14 Lord Rosebery went to Liverpool and developed the Chesterfield doctrine of the 'clean slate' in a series of speeches which were a bold challenge to the left wing of the party. He now made it clear that he was not, as Campbell-Bannerman supposed after the Berkeley Square interview, using vague or rhetorical language when he spoke of the 'clean slate.' The Liberal slate was to be cleaned, among other things, of Gladstonian Home Rule, and Irish aspirations to

[1] *Life of Lord Kitchener*, by Sir George Arthur, vol. ii. chap. xliv. pp. 18-26: 'We are now carrying the war on to put two or three hundred Dutchmen in prison at the end of it. It seems to me absurd and wrong, and I wonder the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not have a fit.'—Letter from Lord Kitchener to Mr. Brodrick, March 22, 1901.

be satisfied with County Councils until such time as 'some scheme of Imperial Federation should allow a local and subordinate Irish legislature as part of that scheme.' In reaching that conclusion Lord Rosebery used all the arguments against a Dublin Parliament which for years past had been the staple of Unionist platform oratory, and he avowed that from the beginning he had been sceptical about Mr. Gladstone's policy. Five days later (Feb. 19) Campbell-Bannerman was speaking to the National Liberal Federation at Leicester, and he immediately took up the challenge. First he put a direct question: 'I do not know down to this moment of my speaking to you whether Lord Rosebery speaks to us from the interior of our political tabernacle or from some vantage-ground outside. I practically put that question publicly to him a month ago, but he does not answer it, and I frankly say I do not think it is quite fair to us not to do so.' Passing from that, he declared himself more than ever bewildered as to his noble friend's meaning. But in groping about he had 'laid hands on one definite doctrine,' and he 'regretted to say it was one to which he could give no adherence whatever':—

Gentlemen, I am no believer in the doctrine of the clean slate. It may be capable of explanation, but I take it as it stands. I am, in fact, wholly opposed to the doctrine of the clean slate; and I am equally opposed to that which I am sure is not intended to be its accompaniment, but which seems to me to be its inevitable accompaniment, the practice and penance of the white sheet. I am not prepared to erase from the tablets of my creed any principle or measure, or proposal or ideal or aspiration of Liberalism.

Suppose every article of the Liberal creed sponged off, who was to write on 'the clean slate'? Who was to choose what was to be written?

Surely it is never meant that we ought to wait until we find out what will be popular and suit the whim of the day? We are warned to keep up-to-date and to have new ideas. Why, it has ever been the habit of the Liberal Party not to follow but to lead opinion, to outstrip the average mind, to be in advance of the times. I said it has been our habit—I might almost be justified in saying it has been our fault, for any embarrassment we have

CHAP. XX. 1902. suffered from, and may be suffering from now, is due to our convictions and our imaginations having outrun our opportunities of realisation.

Coming to grips with the Irish question, he protested against the idea that Home Rule was a 'strange, fantastic, whimsical and madcap policy rashly adopted in a random way to secure the Irish vote, and therefore to be easily and lightly dropped at any moment when an equal amount of support can be obtained from any other quarter':—

Not a very noble view of the case! Not, in truth, a very creditable or even decent view of the case, but intelligible enough if there were in the way no principles and no facts. What are these principles and facts? The virtues, the efficiency, the justice of self-government—that is one Liberal principle. The appreciation and encouragement of national sentiment—that is another Liberal principle. The recognition of the popular will constitutionally expressed through the people's representatives—that is another Liberal principle. That may do for principles.

Next he grappled with Lord Rosebery's assumption that the 'statutory and subordinate' Parliament of Gladstonian policy would be the independent separatist Parliament that Unionists alleged it to be, and in an eloquent passage he appealed to the history of the Dominions in justification of Liberal policy. Finally, he turned to the negative side of the question, and asked what would happen if Lord Rosebery's advice were taken:—

Suppose a new or renovated party were by the stroke of a magician's wand to be called into being and placed in office to-morrow. It would not be the Liberal Party, but it would be what the Lord Chancellor would call 'a sort of a Liberal Party,' purified from past errors and disengaged from all entanglements. This party will have abjured Home Rule. How are they to govern Ireland? Is it to be by coercion? Is it to be by placing some of the most important rights of citizenship at the mercy of the Executive? We renounced coercion sixteen years ago. We washed our hands of it. For ten years under Liberal and even under Tory government Ireland has been governed by the ordinary law. Boon upon boon and concession upon concession, pecuniary and others, have been heaped upon Ireland by the

present Government, and yet what do we see to-day? The old, old story! Ireland was pronounced in the House of Commons but a week or two ago to be free from crime, yet within the last few weeks the Government have been fetching down from their rusty armoury—here is something that is rusty if you like—an exceptional law imprisoning members of Parliament and others, and there was a rumour last night that twenty-five new prosecutions were ordered yesterday, and all the squalid business of plank beds and prison clothes and gaol cells is revived.

In the atmosphere of February 1902, it required high courage to speak thus clearly and firmly for the Liberal principle. The public were deeply incensed by the attitude of Irish Nationalists on the South African war. They had not merely espoused the cause of the Boers, but expressed unconcealed delight at British reverses and defeats, and again and again made demonstrations in the House of Commons which were deeply wounding to British feelings.[1] While Campbell-Bannerman continued manfully to urge that these animosities could only be healed by the Liberal remedy for Irish discontent, popular sentiment was undoubtedly with the Liberal Imperialists when they sought to dissociate the party from its compromising alliance with these friends of the enemy. Within twenty-four hours he had his answer from Lord Rosebery, who wrote a brief letter to the *Times*:—

SIR,

In his speech last night my friend, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, asked me if I speak from the interior of his political tabernacle or from some vantage-ground outside. He says that he 'practically' put that question to me a month ago, and that I have not behaved quite fairly in not answering it.

I am ashamed to say that I did not under tand him to have asked this question a month ago. But he has a perfect right to ask it, he shall receive a reply without a moment's delay, and has, indeed, answered it himself.

[1] One of these occurred a fortnight after the Leicester speech, when the reading of a telegram announcing the disaster to Lord Methuen at Tweebosch was greeted with cheers and 'laughter' by certain Nationalist M.P.'s. Mr. Redmond was not present on this occasion, and Mr. Dillon, who was, did his best to restrain the unseemly conduct of those sitting near him.

CHAP. XX. 1902.

Speaking pontifically within his 'Tabernacle' last night he anathematised my declarations on the 'clean slate' and Home Rule. It is obvious that our views on the war and its methods are not less discordant. I remain, therefore, outside his tabernacle, but not, I think, in solitude.

Let me add one word more at this moment of definite separation. No one appreciates more heartily than I do the honest and well-intentioned devotion of Sir Henry to the Liberal Party and what he conceives to be its interests. I only wish I could have shared his labour and supported his policy.—I am, Sir, yours respectfully, ROSEBERY.

Feb. 15.

This, to all appearance, was a stinging declaration of war. Sir Henry was to understand that he was pontificating from his private tabernacle, and not, as he supposed, speaking as leader of the Liberal Party. Lord Rosebery remained outside this tabernacle, but 'not, I think, in solitude.' The meaning of this phrase was made clear in the following week when the formation of a Liberal League, with Lord Rosebery as President, and Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, and Sir H. Fowler as Vice-Presidents, was publicly announced. Campbell-Bannerman watched these events without intervening, but he confided his opinions to the Chief Whip :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Herbert Gladstone

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Feb.* 24, '02.—Many thanks for your letter this morning. I send a line in case my patience should be exhausted by Navy talk and I should be driven away before you arrive to-night.

From all I can learn, the L. Imps. will probably not desert, but they will remain and plot and sap. Their position will be a little more evident and better understood—that is all. They will be very busy: for instance, their devotion to the Navy has required two speeches, and may run to three. It therefore becomes necessary for us to stir up our men, to organise debates, and fill the evenings and the newspapers to an extent beyond any recent effort. We must talk over the best way of doing this.

If it came to disruption, I think your idea of the best course to be followed is excellent.

I am, as you may have found, not an effusive person, and keep

my feeling for the most part to myself, but I wish to say that I have the most sincere appreciation of all you have done during these dreadful years, not only for the party but for myself personally, and I am under a great debt to you for it. It has been a great personal sacrifice for you to go through all the drudgery, without fee or fame, or any reward except that worthy old 'sense of duty,' which is generally shadowy at the best. I hope that whether under your present bondage, or in freer relations, we shall go on together, and if, as I can well believe, it would be a relief to you to make some change in our arrangements of duties, I hope we may without any damage effect it. I do not mean to suggest a change, but it has often weighed on my mind that the party was imposing too much on you, and I want you to know that I personally recognise your claim to greater freedom, if you choose to seek it by and by.

This is of course all between ourselves.

If he felt it necessary to make this suggestion, it was nevertheless a great relief to him to learn that Mr. Gladstone desired no change in his duties, and, like himself, was ready to face the storm.

On March 1 Mr. Asquith issued a long letter to his constituents, explaining his own line of action. 'Dismissing all personal questions, of which we hear and read so much, as wholly irrelevant,' he declared that Lord Rosebery had in his Chesterfield speech 'defined a common ground upon which, at this stage of the conflict, the great majority of Liberals were able to meet. Repudiating with indignation the charges which have been made against our officers and men, and criticising with just severity the manifold shortcomings of the Government both in the methods of their diplomacy and in their conduct of the campaign, he maintained the necessity of prosecuting the war with all possible vigour and effectiveness, and at the same time keeping our ears and our minds open to any overtures for peace which might hold out the hope of an honourable and durable settlement.' Agreement on this ground ought to 'concentrate and consolidate Liberal criticism of the Executive,' but something more than criticism was needed. The Liberal Party must convert and convince the judgment of the

CHAP. XX. 1902. country, and for that purpose it must have an administrative and domestic policy of its own. For ten years it had grappled courageously with an extended programme which every one now acknowledged to be of unmanageable dimensions. The Opposition must, therefore, take stock of the new situation, 'put on one side the unattainable and the relatively unimportant, and combine its efforts upon a few things, which were at the same time weighty, urgent, and within reach.' This was what he understood by the doctrine of the clean slate, and what 'in less picturesque language he had long been preaching to his constituents.'

Mr. Asquith then addressed himself to Home Rule, and declared that the Liberal policy had been frustrated by a 'rooted repugnance of a large majority of the electorate of Great Britain to the creation of a legislative body in Dublin — a repugnance which not even Mr. Gladstone's magnificent courage, unrivalled authority, and unquenchable enthusiasm was able to overcome.' There followed a passage which had great importance in subsequent years :—

The eight years which have since elapsed have done nothing to conciliate and not a little to harden and stiffen the adverse judgment of the British electorate. A great deal of loose rhetoric is current on the subject. But, if we are honest, we must ask ourselves this practical question. Is it to be part of the policy and programme of our party that, if returned to power, it will introduce into the House of Commons a Bill for Irish Home Rule? The answer, in my judgment, is No. And why? Not because we are satisfied—who is?—with the results of six years' Unionist administration. Not because we think that the Irish problem has been either settled or shelved. But because the history of these years, and not least that part of it which is most recent, has made it plain that the ends which we have always had, and still have, in view—the reconciliation of Ireland to the Empire and the relief of the Imperial Parliament (not as regards Ireland alone) from a load of unnecessary burdens—can only be attained by methods which will carry with them, step by step, the sanction and sympathy of British opinion. To recognise facts like these is not apostasy; it is common sense.

The effect of this letter was scarcely softened by the



OLD BELMONT CASTLE

p. 44

assurance contained in a closing paragraph, that the 'new organisation,' *i.e.* the Liberal League, had been formed 'not for the purpose of developing and inflaming differences, but to press forward Liberal work in the country upon the lines and in the spirit' described. As the event proved, Campbell-Bannerman was not stubbornly opposed to the step-by-step approach to an Irish solution, provided the ultimate object of complete Home Rule was not compromised; but this was less important at the moment than the patent fact, which the public seized upon, that his principal colleague had repudiated his Leicester speech and adopted the doctrine of the 'clean slate' which he had denounced as the 'white sheet.' And not only Mr. Asquith, but Sir Edward Grey and Sir Henry Fowler, to say nothing of other people less important but still supposed to be in the hierarchy of the party, had joined an organisation which seemed plainly intended to challenge Campbell-Bannerman's leadership.

III

There was consternation in the rank and file. What demon of mischief had possessed the Liberal leaders? Just when they were getting to the end of their South African troubles with a policy for the war which all sections had acclaimed, they must choose to start a new and entirely hypothetical quarrel about the Irish question. This time even the faithful centre was disturbed, and Campbell-Bannerman himself was sharply criticised by some of his warmest supporters. Why couldn't he have left Lord Rosebery alone? Why start this trouble about the 'Tabernacle' and the 'clean slate'? The new lines of division cut across the previous ones, and were as bewildering to a large number who had called themselves Imperialists as to the average un-hyphenated members of the party. 'What,' asked a distracted Liberal chairman, in a letter to the *Westminster Gazette*, 'is a Liberal to do, who on the one hand is out of sympathy with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as to the war and all collateral issues, and on the other

CHAP. XX. 1902.

has had the hopes of Chesterfield dashed by the speeches of Liverpool; who refuses to wipe off the slate the cause for which Mr. Gladstone so heroically worked in his later years, and who is amazed to find the separation bogy of Unionist platforms held up to Liberals by an advocate of sane Imperialism and efficiency?' Hundreds of Liberals who had been drawn to the right wing on the issue of the war protested that on all others they were and intended to remain staunch Radicals, and had no sympathy whatever with any attempt to water down the doctrine in the sphere of home politics. Campbell-Bannerman was implored not to answer back but to 'leave himself in the hands of his friends,' and, in the meantime, M.P.'s were receiving strong warnings from constituents in all parts of the country that they would engage in this quarrel at their peril.

Campbell-Bannerman was very angry. For all his equable appearance he had his full share of obstinacy when his temper was roused, and he had again and again declared that the one thing he would not tolerate was the formation of a separate *organisation* within the party. By an *organisation* he meant not propaganda Associations, like the Eighty Club or the National Reform Union, but a body formed to collect funds, promote candidatures and influence electioneering in the interests of one section against another, or one group of leaders against another. And this, to all appearance, the Liberal League, as distinguished from the now dissolved Liberal Imperialist Council, was intended to be. It was, moreover, a serious challenge to him that men of the eminence of the Vice-Presidents of the new League, supposed to be his intimate colleagues, should publicly enlist under the banner of the man who had just declared for 'definite separation' from him. There was much wrestling behind the scenes as to the proper course for him to take, and the counsellors for open war were not few or unimportant. Nevertheless, he was prevailed upon to wait and see, and the same cooling influence was brought to bear upon the other side, and especially by Mr. Asquith, who in all the agitations of these times never lost touch with Campbell-

Bannerman. Lord Rosebery, speaking at Glasgow on March 10, described the League as a defensive organisation to prevent his friends from being 'drummed out of the Liberal Party,' and said it would be a fatal mistake for them to leave the Liberal Associations with which they were already connected. They meant to live and to work inside the Liberal Party, but to attempt to 'permeate it and influence it in the only direction which they believe to be sound.' At the same time he suggested that the proper solution of the Irish question would be found in devolution or Home Rule all round. Mr. Asquith spoke four days later at St. Leonard's, and put in a sentence to meet Campbell-Bannerman's views about separate organisations. 'He would have nothing to do with any aggressive movement against his fellow-Liberals, he would have nothing to do with any attempt to destroy or weaken the general organisation of the party. He would have nothing to do with any organisation, if such there be, which was intended to promote and to foment personal rivalries and personal ambitions. He would have nothing to do with any organisation which required him or anybody else upon entering its portals to abandon any single Liberal principle.' By the end of March most M.P.'s and active politicians who had joined the League had explained that Mr. Asquith spoke for them all. The last thing they were thinking of was the 'definite separation' which Lord Rosebery had proclaimed; the last thing they would promote or encourage was party schism, founded on personal rivalry or ambition.

Campbell-Bannerman was content to leave it at that for the time being, while registering a vow that the Leaguers should be required to live up to these professions. There were some among them whose disclaimer of personal intrigues he did not accept at their face value, and he made no secret of his annoyance when he learned a little later that the first move of the League had been to engage Mr. Allard, the skilful organiser of the Home Counties Liberal Federation, as their principal agent. This was precisely the kind of interference with the machine which he intended

CHAP. XX. 1902. to prevent if he could, and for many months to come it continued to be a cause of petty friction. But, looking back on these times in the light of after events, we may say that the main issue was decided in his favour during the first three weeks of the League's existence. If its promoters had seriously carried out their apparent intention of founding an Association to support Lord Rosebery in his 'definite separation' from Campbell-Bannerman, the entire subsequent history of the party and even the history of the world might have been changed. No one can say what would have been the result of a cleavage which placed Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey in opposition to Campbell-Bannerman, or prevented these three men from holding office together in the same Government. But politicians do not always put two and two together, and the Leaguers apparently had not foreseen or intended the construction which would inevitably be placed on the launching of their scheme, with Lord Rosebery as its presiding genius, on the morrow of the publication of his 'definite separation' letter. When they saw it, they immediately began to draw back. It was explained that adhesion to Lord Rosebery was possible without defection from C.-B., and that, though the head of the sect might be definitely separated from the mother church (or Tabernacle), his followers remained in communion with it. There was a certain ambiguity in this dual allegiance which in the sequel worked greatly to the disadvantage of Lord Rosebery, but for the time being it saved the situation and prevented what might otherwise have been a fatal schism. Gradually the idea developed that the League, so far from disintegrating the Liberal Party, would help to attract into its fold the considerable number of uneasy and doubting spirits who would otherwise have been repelled by the strong fumes of Radical and pro-Boer opinion. That in a measure it did.

Campbell-Bannerman was prepared for disruption and had laid his plans for what seemed an almost certain contingency. Fighting plans they were, as any one who saw

him in these days can attest. He relied, as usual, on the faithful centre, on his indefatigable Chief Whip, Gladstone, on the support of Morley, Harcourt, Bryce, and of all the more eager fighting spirits in the rank and file, and by no means least on the staunch body of Liberal peers who had hitherto supported him through all. His old chief and warm friend, Lord Spencer, had taken occasion to say publicly that 'if the Liberal Party cleaned its slate of Home Rule, he must take a back seat, and look on; he might support them on certain things, but he should certainly not belong to the party.' But, apart from this immediate personal support, Campbell-Bannerman was convinced that time was on his side. From beginning to end he held firmly to a quite simple philosophy of the party system which he frequently expounded to his friends. There were times when the country wanted Toryism and there were times when it wanted Liberalism, but it never wanted something between the two. For a Liberal to dilute his doctrine in the hope of appeasing national sentiment when the country was Tory was pure folly, for when the tide turned, he would be found to have entangled himself with the very doctrine which the country wished to be rid of. He was confident that the tide would turn rapidly when the war ended, and that the Liberalism which the country would then want would be of the robust kind which had weathered without bending to the storm of 1900. The Leaguers, in his view, were trimming their sails to the wrong wind.

IV

This view no doubt did less than justice to men who had sincerely objected to his line on the war and who honestly feared for national interests if a Liberal Party dominated by the left wing should come into power. To Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith, and Sir Edward Grey the South African war was a dangerous emergency for the Empire, in which national unity and, therefore, the avoidance of all divisions on policy were imperative until the success of British arms

CHAP. XX. 1902. was assured. To Campbell-Bannerman the danger seemed to lie less in the war than in the consequences which would follow it, unless the guiding lines of a right policy were laid down from the beginning and constantly kept in view even in the heat of battle. Each group acted honestly according to its lights, and the collision between them was inevitable. But Campbell-Bannerman was eminently right in his belief that, when the war ended, the party must unite on his policy, and from the beginning of 1902 onwards events were moving rapidly to that conclusion. Before the month of March was out, not only the Liberal Party but practically the whole country was converted to the peace by negotiation which was shortly to be concluded at Vereeniging. The slate, therefore, was cleaning itself of the principal cause of dissension, and the Government in the meantime was evidently preparing a new grand offensive against the Liberal Party. On March 24 the Education Bill was introduced; on April 14 Sir Michael Hicks Beach made his Budget statement, and proposed a shilling tax on corn and flour. By the middle of April it was clear that the Tory Party itself was to perform the miracle of reuniting the Liberal Party. Evidently, as Liberals began to see, the 'rusty armour' would have to be put on again to defend the 'ancient shibboleths,' and the old Liberalism revived to meet the new Toryism. By the end of May left wing and right wing were tumbling over each other in their zeal to meet the attack. Lord Rosebery declared flatly in a speech at the National Liberal Club on May 23 that the Education Bill 'conflicted with every Liberal principle,' and that 'its operative effect would or should be to reunite the Liberal Party.' Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Asquith were from the first on the same line, and, with the exception of Mr. Haldane, who floated in a little back-water of his own, every leading man of both sections followed them. The same result followed from the introduction of the corn-tax; the entire party without exception instinctively saw in it a breach in the free-trade position which, if not instantly closed, would let in the flood of

protection. And these things, as Liberals pointed out, were being done by a Government which had given the public to understand that it could vote for the Unionist Party on the war issue without prejudicing any other cause which it had at heart. By the end of May, Campbell-Bannerman had the satisfaction of hearing the advocate of 'definite separation' ingeminating unity. 'I think,' said Lord Rosebery at the National Liberal Club, 'the Liberal Opposition in Parliament never stood so well for unity. . . . I believe that if you can once come together, and I do not doubt it for a moment, and stand shoulder to shoulder in a great political cause, you will forget these petty personal causes, as to the existence of which I entertain the most wholesome doubts—you will forget the phantom of these personal questions and resuscitate a great political party worthy of the portraits I see around these walls.' (May 23.)

On May 31 the Boer Commission signed at Pretoria the terms of peace which had been negotiated between them and Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner at Vereeniging. Though the Boers had remained in the field and even obtained a sensational success by the capture of Lord Methuen and his force early in March, it had for many months been evident that they were fighting not with any hope of saving their independence but to obtain tolerable terms for its surrender. In January the Dutch Government, as if to supply the neutral inn suggested by Lord Rosebery, had proffered their services to bring together the Boers in Europe and the Boers in South Africa with a view to negotiations, and, though they had been rather abruptly told that no third party could be allowed to intervene, the British Government's answer had at least left the door open to the negotiated peace which opinion in this country more and more favoured, in spite of the harder note which was still struck by the civil administration in South Africa. The Vereeniging pact required the Boers to surrender their arms and to recognise King Edward VII. as their lawful sovereign; but it also guaranteed them

CHAP. XX. 1902.

immunity from all proceedings, civil or criminal (save in the case of certain acts contrary to the usages of war which had been notified to the Boer generals); secured them in their liberty and their property and the possession of arms necessary for their protection; conceded the use of the Dutch language in schools and law-courts; promised that military administration in the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies should at the earliest possible moment be succeeded by civil Government, that no special tax should be imposed on landed property to defray the costs of the war, and that a free gift of £3,000,000, as well as loans free of interest for two years, should be granted to assist the restoration of the people to their farms. Further, the banishment clauses of the September proclamation were dropped and the thorny question of amnesty for the rebels in Cape Colony settled by an assurance that the punishment for the rank and file should be disfranchisement, and that, in the case of officers, officials, and Justices of the Peace, the death penalty would in no case be inflicted.

The steps by which this conclusion was reached have been set out in Sir George Arthur's *Life of Lord Kitchener*,[1] and are no part of this narrative. Campbell-Bannerman had had his last bout with Mr. Chamberlain in a speech at Darlington on May 24, when he indignantly repudiated the charge of having vilified the soldiers and encouraged the Boers, and boldly claimed for himself and his party that, by urging that harshness should be avoided and generous terms indicated or offered, they had softened the feelings of the enemy and induced a desire for settlement.[2]

[1] *Life of Lord Kitchener*, by Sir George Arthur, vol. ii. chaps. liv.-lvi.

[2] In his *Letters to Isabel* (pp. 202-3), Lord Shaw of Dunfermline adds a detail, on the authority of General Smuts, which may be accepted as historical. Describing one of the last of the Conferences at Vereeniging, he says:—

They discussed far into the night. Lord Milner was obdurate—I think Smuts's words were, 'He was impossible.' When all hope seemed lost, Smuts felt himself gripped by the elbow and, looking round, he saw Lord Kitchener, who whispered to him: 'Come out, come out for a little.' The two of them left the Conference, and they paced outside back and forward through the dark.

Kitchener and Smuts were both well aware of the accumulating horror

In the short speech in which he joined in the general congratulations in the House of Commons (June 2), he left all recrimination behind him :—

'I believe,' he said, 'that the harmony of feeling with which we greet this announcement is complete. We are at one in our recognition of those who have fought for us, of the courage and endurance, patience and discipline they have displayed, and by which they have maintained the traditions of the British Army. I am sure I can go further and say we are unanimous in our admiration of those who until now have been our enemies, and who are now our friends and fellow-citizens, whose military qualities, whose tenacity of purpose, whose self-sacrificing devotion to liberty and country have won for them the respect of the whole world, and foremost of all the respect of us who have been their opponents. And, sir, we shall also be alike in our hope and expectation that on the date of this Peace there will dawn an era of concord and prosperity in South Africa.'

Three days later he seconded the grant of £50,000 to Lord Kitchener, and contrived to let it be seen that he was praising not only the soldier but the administrator and negotiator who, according to reports already current, had played a leading part in the making of the peace :—

We see enough to be aware of the supreme part that was played by that silent, modest, simple, almost stern figure of the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa. And, therefore, this vote does not convey merely a conventional compliment to the military staff in South Africa through its head. It also in an unusual degree

of a long guerilla warfare. They were both sincerely anxious for an arrangement. And then Kitchener said to him :

'Look here, Smuts, there is something on my mind that I want to tell you. I can only give it you as my opinion ; but my opinion is that in two years' time a Liberal Government will be in power; and if a Liberal Government comes into power, it will grant you a constitution for South Africa.'

Said Smuts, 'That is a very important pronouncement. If one could be sure of the like of that, it would make a great difference.'

'As I say,' said Kitchener, 'it is only my opinion, but honestly I *do* believe that that will happen.'

'That,' said General Smuts to me, 'accomplished the peace. We went back and the arrangements at the Conference were definitely concluded, and the war came to a close.'

CHAP. XX. 1902.

means an appreciation of the individual character and service. Lord Kitchener has shown himself a great soldier, but he has shown himself to be more than that—he has shown himself to be a great administrator, a master of the art of organisation, a tactful negotiator and a large-minded man. He is of the very best type of character, which, with our pardonable partiality, we attribute to the British name. He is strenuous and pertinacious. He is straight and direct in his action, and he thinks of his duty and never thinks of himself.

Within a week he and Mr. Asquith appeared together at the Birthday dinner of the Eighty Club—a welcome sign to the party of another kind of peace. Here he claimed that the war had ended in the way and method—the consent of their adversaries and the friendly agreement with them—which the Liberal Party had advocated, and he spoke of the need of watchfulness 'to make sure that no grave error of policy vitiated what had been done in South Africa, or imperilled the amity and concord they fondly hoped had been established.' Mr. Asquith at the same gathering roused a ringing cheer when he declared that 'rarely, if ever, in the history of parties had any Government at the same time challenged the favour of destiny, and fired the zeal of its opponents by producing in one session two such measures as the Education Bill and the Corn Tax.' There was still a long way to go before Liberal unity was completely achieved, but from this moment Campbell-Bannerman was in close association with Mr. Asquith and both men worked together continuously to the same end.

CHAPTER XXI

A PERSONAL CHAPTER

Belmont inside and out—The Old Ways—A Lover of Dogs—Old Servants and Friends—A good Hater—Many Interests—Methodical House-keeping—Preparing Speeches—Some Reminiscences—Sir Ralph Thompson's Strategy—A Retort to James Bryce—Love of France—A Tip for New Peers—Religious Views—A Discursive Reader—From a Commonplace Book—Simplicity and Kindliness.

THERE are public men whose private and public characters are divided by a sharp line, with little or no overflow from the one to the other. This was not so with Campbell-Bannerman. His qualities and idiosyncrasies penetrated the whole man, and as he appeared in public so he was in his own home—the same faithful, shrewd, humorous, and kindly man who won the hearts of his constituents and eventually of the public. There are no secrets to reveal about him, but a few pages devoted to his familiar ways may help to show what manner of man he was and what impression he made upon his contemporaries and intimates.

It has already been recorded that in 1871 he inherited a life-interest in the estate of Hunton, near Maidstone in Kent, from his maternal uncle, Henry Bannerman; and this, or rather the adjacent house on the same property called 'Gennings,' served him as a country residence for the next sixteen years. But so ingrained a Scot as he was could not strike deep roots as a country gentleman in the south of England, and more and more, as he grew older, his thoughts turned to a home in Scotland. His choice fell on Belmont Castle in Perthshire, which he bought from Lord Wharncliffe, into whose family it had come from James Stewart Mackenzie, a famous Scot, who was 'Envoy and

Plenipotentiary' in Turin and Venice, and subsequently Privy Seal and Administrator of Scottish Affairs in the eighteenth century. James Stewart Mackenzie purchased the property (formerly known as Kirkhill and occasionally the residence of the Bishop of Dunkeld) from Sir William Nairn of Dunsinnan in 1752, and built the original house between 1765 and 1769. That house was almost entirely destroyed by fire, and was little more than a shell when Campbell-Bannerman bought it in 1885. To-day the south wing alone, with its central turret, retains its eighteenth-century aspect, the rest being to all intents and purposes a new house which he erected on the site of the old one, but the park and grounds are still as Stewart Mackenzie planned them.[1]

The house stands on rising ground in the vale of Strathmore, and commands a wide view of the Grampians to the north and of the Sidlaw Hills to the south-west. Through the valley below runs the River Isla, and half a mile to the north is the village of Meigle famous for its carved stones, which are still a subject of lively controversy among archæologists. To the south and west of the house are broad stretches of green lawn running up to a screen of noble trees—beech, ash, Himalayan pine, and giant Wellingtonia mingling with the common kinds of spruce and larch. When the sun is low the hills are a deep blue between gaps in the trees. On the south front of the house is a square rose-garden, enclosed by yew hedges with rows of acacias on three sides. To the south-east on the far side of the lawn is a big enclosed garden with abundant fruit on its high red walls, which have hot-houses and vineries built against them; and within it are two acres or more laid out

[1] Belmont Castle and 'the amenity grounds thereof' were purchased after Campbell-Bannerman's death by Mrs. Marryat (widow of Col. H. C. Maryatt, late Colonel commanding the 1st Batt. Manchester Regiment, and formerly residing at Finnart, Loch Long) and by her presented to the town of Dundee in commemoration of her husband and of her brother, the late Sir James Key Caird, Bart. From 1918 to 1922 it was a Convalescent Home for disabled soldiers and, according to the terms of the gift, is to be used permanently as a Home of Rest for the workers of Dundee.

in vegetables and herbaceous borders. On the opposite side, behind the house, are large and well-built stables. CHAP. XXI.

Campbell-Bannerman often complained with truth that he was thought to be a great deal richer than he was, but here at all events was all the appearance of well-ordered prosperity. The house itself was spacious and comfortable, with an immense lounge hall—originally an open court-yard which he roofed in—in the centre, and large and lofty rooms communicating with each other running round the two sides on west and south. Much time and thought were spent on planning, decorating, and furnishing before the new owner entered into residence. There was some French furniture of fine quality, and among the pictures one exquisite Matthew Maris; but solid comfort rather than show was the aim of the occupants of this house. Soft carpets, deep arm-chairs, large open fireplaces were in every room. The annexe built on to the old house is as big as a complete new house, and provided large and commodious guest-rooms and servants' quarters. Campbell-Bannerman did not entertain what are commonly called house-parties, but during the three or four months that he and his wife were at Belmont there was a steady flow of guests, consisting mostly of relations, old friends, and constituents. Mr. Morley came on his way back from his own Burghs; colleagues and officials were often summoned from London. As he used to explain, it was the easiest thing in the world to get to Belmont. You left London at midday, went straight through to Alyth Junction; a carriage would take you to the house in ten minutes, and you were in bed at a not unreasonable hour. If he complained of being 'dragged up' when he had settled down, he nevertheless claimed that there was no easier way of getting to the heart of Scotland or from it to Whitehall. ÆT. 50-71.

He and his wife were generally for the old ways. Other people might dismantle their stables and take up with motors, but there should be nothing but carriages and horses at Belmont in their time. The coachman was an institution, a real friend of the family and less formidable

than the head gardener, of whom his master went somewhat in awe. Dogs were always favoured members of the family, her ladyship's dogs and Sir Henry's dogs, and letters to the servants abound in inquiries about those which were left behind when they came to London. Campbell-Bannerman was a town man who loved the country. He sauntered, he took drives, he was in and out as the spirit moved him; he did considerable spells of work and correspondence, and was a great desultory reader of all sorts of books, especially French books, with which his library was well stocked. The only thing that marred his pleasure was the constant ill-health of his wife; and at Belmont, as elsewhere, he devoted himself to finding means to relieve her pain and increase her comfort.

II

From the year 1872 onwards a yearly visit to Marienbad in Bohemia was part of the routine of his life until his wife died there in 1906. 'Les eaux guérissent quelquefois, soulagent souvent et consolent toujours' is a sentence by a certain Dr. Constantine James which he has copied into a commonplace book. The cure was for his wife, but in the early hours of the morning he himself appeared like other people with his glass at the springs, and took a certain pleasure in following the régime. Dr. Ott, the famous Marienbad doctor, was not only a trusted physician, but, like Dr. Burnet in London, a warm personal friend, whom it was always a pleasure to him and his wife to see again. Apart from the cure, he liked the climate and the pleasant scenery of the place; and though, as the years went on, he complained of the smart throng which more and more spoilt its rural simplicity, he found compensation in observing the eminent and queer people who gathered there from all countries. All sorts of people interested him, and as the years went by he gathered about him a little circle of Marienbad cronies, of whom Mr. Kutnow (who had made fame and fortune by an ingenious adaptation of curative waters) was by no means the least friendly and obliging. If Marienbad

grew in favour and attracted an increasing number of English visitors, it was to a considerable extent his own doing, for he was never weary of singing its praises and recommending it to his friends. But it became harder, as he admits, to lead the simple life prescribed by Dr. Ott when royalty followed on the heels of politicians and diplomats. The Prince of Wales discovered the place in 1896, and was a frequent visitor in the subsequent years when he had come to the throne. It was at Marienbad in 1905 that Campbell-Bannerman had the intimate conversations with the King which laid the foundations of their cordial understanding in the subsequent three years. Frequent meetings in which ceremony was waived and holiday conditions ruled enabled the King to see and know more of him than was possible in the formal intercourse between Sovereign and Minister at home. Campbell-Bannerman was at his best on these occasions, and had exactly the combination of tact, wit, and worldly wisdom that King Edward most appreciated.

He usually left Marienbad about the 20th of September, and on the way back spent a week at Vienna or Salzburg, and four or five days in Paris. He never tired of singing the praises of Vienna, and often on a gloomy day in London would wish that he could be set down in the Ringstrasse. All busy men have their dreams of the kind of life they would like if they were free, and his was to roam about Europe, dip into the life of foreign cities, taste of the best that they provided in the pleasant days before 1914. If France was his first love, he had the happy knack of being at home everywhere and getting on with all the tribes. In this sense he was much more cosmopolitan than most British politicians.

III

A few reminiscences supplied by the friends and private secretaries who stayed with him at Belmont, or saw him intimately in London, may be set down in this chapter, though some of them anticipate the regular course of this

CHAP. XXI. 1886-1908.

narrative. His feeling for certain familiar objects was curious and childlike. He had a great collection of walking-sticks, most of them unusually slight in build with quaint-looking handles. To these he would talk affectionately under his breath, as he selected the one to be taken for an airing, murmuring words of consolation to the ones to be left behind. A drawer in a bureau was filled with the stumps of pencils—old friends, he used to explain, who had served him well and deserved to be decently cared for when their day was done. His special delight was in his trees. The gardener might do anything within his own territory, the walled garden, but the master had always to be consulted before the trees were touched. Not unfrequently on returning to Belmont his first act was to pay a formal visit to his special favourites, and he would bow to them and wish them good morning. There was one noble conifer to which he would raise his hat and ask after 'Madame's' health in his courtliest way. Her 'charming skirts' sweeping to the ground were always trimmed with infinite care under his own special guidance.

At all times he delighted in children and would stop those he met in his walks and make them talk to him. 'One Sunday morning at Belmont,' says Mr. Nash, 'he came to look for me and beckoned me with an air of excitement into a room where sat a composed young gentleman of twelve or thirteen in full Highland rig. The boy had walked over from a neighbouring village to confide to C.-B. his desire to enter the Navy and to obtain his assistance in the fulfilment of this ambition. The Prime Minister's delight in the intrepidity of the young raider was great, and his eyes shone with pride at the gallant bearing of the boy. As soon as the visitor had gone he went straight to his desk and wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty, bespeaking an admission which in due course was forthcoming.' Another time Mr. Nash went into the Prime Minister's room in the House of Commons, and found the diminutive boy who brought the tea earnestly leaning over him as he sat in his chair, and confiding to him his ambitions for an enlarged



BELMONT CASTLE, MEIGLE, PERTHSHIRE

As Rebuilt and Enlarged by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman

p 44

career, and receiving the same respectful attention as the naval hero. CHAP. XXI.

In the early days at Belmont Campbell-Bannerman used ÆT. 50-71. to shoot a little, but in later years he contented himself with walking out with his guests, who found sufficient sport either in the Belmont coverts or others rented for them. He was not and never pretended to be a sportsman, and he liked living things too much to be happy in killing them. It delighted him to see rabbits on the lawn at Belmont, and his refusal to let them be shot, trapped, or wired out was the despair of the gardeners. In all his domestic ways he was homely and conservative. He hated splash and novelty, loved old servants, old horses, old carriages, and clung to familiar objects when their uses were exhausted or forgotten. He spoke of the death of his coachman (Hadenham) in 1892 as a 'terrible blow.' 'He has been so long with us and was so completely trusted by us that we do not know where to turn, and, although he was a quiet and reserved man, he was much attached to us and we to him. There never was a better coachman, kinder to his horses and more faithful to his duties.' For the Aldersons, one of whom was housekeeper and another lady's maid, he had the greatest regard, and he never spoke of them without affection. His habit of talking to everybody and remembering not only the faces and names but the family circumstances and history of those about him made him a friend to his neighbours, and gave a human and homely flavour to his relations with them. No one less gave himself the airs of a wealthy laird.

He was an extremely shrewd judge of character, and had a merciless eye for time-servers and flatterers. He never pretended to like people whom he did not like, and, though an essentially charitable and good-natured man, he was undoubtedly, as the expression goes, a good hater when occasion required it. He had a disconcerting habit of sizing people up and labelling them with epithets which were repeated, in the Homeric fashion, whenever their names were mentioned. In private and in public life there were certain people whom

CHAP. XXI. 1886-1908. no persuasion could induce him to think well of, and even if he was obliged to be civil to them, he remained absolutely determined not to have them with him in any serious undertaking. It was an ominous sign that a man was in his black books when he spoke of him as 'Master' ('Master Haldane,' 'Master Grey,' 'Master Munro-Ferguson'—it used to be when the Liberal League was on the war-path), but this might be a passing annoyance, whereas there was an outer darkness from which those who were consigned to it seldom or never returned. These aversions were reserved for men whom he thought really bad—self-seekers, tricksters, persons currying favour for mean or corrupt purposes, vulgarians crowding round the great for their own self-advertisement. For this sort of low company he had no tolerance at all, and, if the choice had to be made, he infinitely preferred respectable dullness. When his secretaries had made up the list of his dinner-parties with an artistic eye for good company, his frequent comment was, 'Not enough heavy metal.'

Much as he liked the company of wits—in which he more than held his own—he was seldom or never bored. He had an insatiable interest in men, women and things, and in his travels abroad a great part of his pleasure was simply in looking at people. He would sit on Dover pier and watch the channel steamers come in and go out. In later years he often crossed over by the morning boat and came back by the afternoon boat, just for the sea-breeze and the excellent French lunch which was (and is) to be had at the Calais Gare Maritime. When staying in hotels he liked to choose a table which commanded the largest view, and from that vantage-ground he studied the company and summed them up in lively character sketches, sometimes furnishing the unknown with life histories, and generally expressing very positive opinions about ladies' dresses and styles of beauty. Mr. MacKinnon Wood relates how, seeing him busily at work with pencil and paper on the front bench one day when debate was dull, he asked him what he was doing. 'I am constructing a dunces'

tripos,' was the answer, and sure enough he had them arranged in classes and was looking round for names to fill with the vacant places. Most little things pleased him. He loved shops and shop-windows, and when in Paris was never so happy as when on shopping expeditions to buy presents for his friends. One notebook among his papers contains nothing but the addresses of Paris tradesmen. He was also full of lore about the specialities of European restaurants and the proper places to go for certain kinds of foods. While Secretary for War he engaged in an earnest correspondence with a royal princess about the way to improve her coffee, and directed her to a shop in Vienna which supplied the best beans to be had in all Europe.

He had a Scottish precision in managing his own affairs. Every year he made up the final balance-sheet of Hunton with his own hand, and no accountant could have done it more neatly and correctly. He inspected his own tradesmen's books, paid the servants' wages himself, and settled the books of housekeepers and outdoor servants. All through his life he entered every item of his expenditure in little pocket-books. Everything is included—bills, subscriptions, railway fares, cab fares, dog tickets, even a shilling tip to a porter and a shilling for having his hair cut. When he went abroad he gave himself a holiday from the details and entered a lump sum. Thus on one page in 1888 is found 'Trip to Paris, including food and theatres, etc. (apparently for a fortnight) £120, dog to Glasgow 2s., hair-cutting 1s.' This he kept up year by year without dropping a day, and always in the same beautiful microscopic handwriting, to the last month of his life. Another record faithfully kept was that of the weights of himself and his wife on a given day at Marienbad each year. These are on a half-sheet of note-paper both in Austrian and English weights and measures, the former being reduced to the third decimal point of an English ounce.

He was neat and (as a young man) even dandified in his person, and in his houses he wanted everything to be kept tidy except his writing-table. This had always to be left

with two sloping mounds of letters and papers on either side of the blotting-paper. His secretaries regarded it with misgiving, always feeling convinced that the paper they were looking for was embedded in one of the hill-sides. 'Stop a moment,' he would say, 'I know exactly where everything is,' and in a trice he would ferret out the paper that was wanted. A new servant one day tidied the writing-table. The result was chaos.

He devoted immense pains to the preparation of public speeches, with a result that they often read a great deal better than they sounded. He had few of the platform arts, and his habit of reading his notes with one eye (which, being short-sighted, served him for that purpose without the aid of glasses to the end of his life) was far from graceful. His voice at its best was good, and the Scottish burr in it gave it quality, but it was variable and not always audible. It is one of the oddities of English public life that men whose business it is to be efficient public speakers go through their lives without an elementary knowledge of elocution, and apparently do not think it necessary to acquire it. It was said of Campbell-Bannerman that no one else with his brains and capacity could—on occasions—make so bad a speech. Again and again in the years of Opposition his friends were reduced to wondering that a man who was so quick, ready, and witty in his talk could so fumble and hesitate in debate as he did when he found the atmosphere uncongenial to him in the House of Commons. The truth is that he was much more sensitive to hostility than could be inferred from his unruffled appearance. With all his stoutness in standing up to opponents and stemming the popular tides, he yet felt deeply certain forms of attack which he believed to be intended not to answer his arguments, but to damage him personally and to affront his dignity. These he greatly resented, and to a certain extent they prevented him from doing justice to himself in the years of Opposition. When he came to power the effect of the new atmosphere was almost miraculous, and even his warmest admirers marvelled at the dignity and authority

and mastery and readiness in debate which he seemed suddenly and for the first time in his life to have acquired.

But his prepared speeches were almost always effective, and few men of his generation gave more time and thought to literary form. The autumns at Belmont were often devoted to preparation, which was undertaken in a thoroughly methodical manner. His object seems to have been to make one speech carry on to another. 'I did not use any of your last bundle,' he writes to his secretary in 1900, 'so it stands for use at Dundee. And what with crumbs from previous tables and some newer ideas, I can rig up enough for Alloa this week. A few diamonds, however, to give sparkle, jokes, epigrams, phrases never come amiss.' 'I have some good bits of offal still on hand available to eke out the Glasgow speech,' he writes on another occasion. At other times he confesses that the cupboard is bare, but 'let us hope,' he adds cheerfully, 'that some foolish thing will be said or done before the 16th of November.' Politics must indeed be at a low ebb when there are not individuals on both sides who can be trusted to perform this indispensable function for their fellow-beings. The non-political occasion was, as all public men know, the most trying. 'Do help me,' he cries, 'it is non-political, and I must rig up some paradoxes or platitudes or facetiæ, and the occasion suggests nothing.' It may be added that he was at times a sharp critic of other people's speeches. 'Platform,' whispered a colleague into his ear, when a certain new member had made a windily rhetorical speech. 'No, overflow,' was the reply.

IV

Campbell-Bannerman and his wife had many intimate friends among their Scottish neighbours, the chief of whom were Sir John Kinloch of Kinloch, a staunch Liberal who represented East Perthshire from 1889 to 1903; Mr R. Stuart Menzies of Hallyburton, Sir John's predecessor in the same seat; his brother, Mr. W. D. G. Menzies, and Mrs. Menzies; Archdeacon and Mrs. Aglen, who lived at

Alyth and were frequent visitors at Belmont; Blanche Lady Airlie, whom he often visited at Airlie Castle; and Captain and Mrs. Hunter, of Alyth. In the years in which there was no autumn session many Scottish M.P.'s and their wives, and candidates fighting Scottish seats, paid short visits, and, as already said, colleagues and political leaders found Belmont a convenient house of call. Campbell-Bannerman took no part in local politics, and lived on friendly terms with his Conservative neighbours; but at Belmont, as elsewhere, his main business in life was politics and his principal visitors were politicians. 'C.-B.', however, was the most human of politicians, and no host could have been more skilful and ready in small talk on all subjects.

Something of his quality in these respects is well shown in certain reminiscences supplied by Mr. Henry Higgs (one of his secretaries when he was Prime Minister), who visited him at Belmont:—

He told me that he had ordered a haggis for dinner for my special benefit. I had just been reading Dr. Murray's latest issue of his *New Historical Dictionary*, and mentioned his article 'Pie' with its various meanings, a coin, a piece of pastry, a colour, a bird, etc. An underlying idea was that of an assortment of odds and ends, compare the magpie, 'a picker up of unconsidered trifles,' French *agace*—the Scottish haggis, and so forth! 'Dr. Murray,' he said, 'is a learned fool! Haggis is merely a corruption of the French *hachis*, and is not a medley of odds and ends but simply minced mutton.' His knowledge of gastronomy was profound, and though in his later years he was obliged to refrain from most of the delicacies which he offered his friends, he was always interested in conversation about fine eating. On one of his visits to Marienbad King Edward, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria, and (I think) Lord Nicholson and Lord Haldane were also taking the waters, and when he returned I showed him an illustrated paper with a sketch of King Edward talking very earnestly and striking his hand in his palm while C.-B. listened gravely. Around them in the garden of the Kurhaus the visitors stood in a ring at a respectful distance. The picture bore the title 'Is it Peace or War?' and a note explained that Austrian opinion was excited over the meeting of the high

British political and military authorities with their sovereign and the ruler of Bulgaria, and believed that the question under discussion was whether Britain and Bulgaria would join hands in the next Balkan War. I said, 'The artist has hit you off very well.' He looked at the paper quizzingly and said solemnly, 'Would you like to know what the King was saying to me?' I said I should. 'He wanted to have my opinion whether halibut is better baked or boiled!'

One of his favourite writers was Anatole France, whose *Jeanne d'Arc* he presented to me on its publication; and among the books which he always himself chose for my bedside at Belmont there was sure to be one volume by that author. *Sur la Pierre Blanche* was heavily scored and marked by him in several places. In one of his novels the French writer describes an army on active service. The scouts are sent out. They fail to secure contact with the enemy, and report at nightfall that there is nothing in the neighbourhood. *C'est alors que les tacticiens triomphent!* They spread out their maps and say what they would have done if the enemy had been found here or there. 'I used,' he said, 'to read this to the staff at the War Office to do them good, but they never liked it.' Another of his War Office experiences was the ingenuity of Sir R. Thompson, then Under-Secretary of State. The Duke of Cambridge sometimes made proposals which it was impossible to accept and delicate to oppose. Thompson's usual formula was, 'His Royal Highness's suggestions are very weighty. But will not those obstinate people in the House of Commons (or those foolish people in the Treasury) say'—and then followed Thompson's own unanswerable objections put into the mouths of third parties. 'I do not for a moment say that I agree with them, but how are we to dispose of them?' And so the project fell stillborn.

On one occasion I told him that I was engaged to dine with the Political Economy Club, and he said that soon after he entered Parliament he was present at one of the dinners as a guest when the discussion turned upon the enormity of voting an allowance to Princess Louise on her marriage to the Marquis of Lorne. John Stuart Mill indicated his opinion that the Duke of Argyll was sufficiently rich to provide for a royal daughter-in-law without the support from the taxes. C.-B., called upon to express his view, said that as a Scotchman and a Campbell he thought Scotland entitled to get what she could out of England, and that he would have been better pleased if the vote had been larger. 'Mill looked daggers at me!' he said, 'and seemed to

be wondering who was this flippant Philistine who had found his way into the Holy of Holies!' I think C.-B. must have been mistaken as to the dinner being at the Political Economy Club, as the records of the Club do not show him to have ever dined with the Club.

It always annoyed him a little to see letters addressed to him at Meigle, N.B. 'When I write to people in England,' he said, 'I don't put S.B. on the envelope.'

I found him chuckling one day after a Cabinet meeting. 'We had a very all round discussion,' he said, 'the Morocco question, the Near East, the Armenian question, and constant talk about places not marked on the map. But James Bryce was always ready. He knew every place, how to get there, how long it took you to get to the railhead and how long to cross the desert by camels, and the rest of it. Just as we were rising, Herbert Gladstone told us about a lady who had been arrested in Regent Street on a charge of loitering and soliciting. Bryce cleared his throat and began, "When I leave the House at night I often walk home by Regent Street and——" Here I put my hand on his shoulder and said, 'My dear Bryce, you must allow us to know something about Regent Street!'

His love of France, the French people, and everything French was very marked. Among my relics of him is the Louis XIV. candelabra which stood on his writing-table. His almost fraternal affection showed itself in countless little acts of kindly remembrance. I received at one time a large box of sugared almonds from Paris, at another a Dundee cake 'which you will find sovran for the digestion,' at another a book-slide, and frequent presents of books. He often asked me to recommend him some light French literature, and was much amused by *Les Transatlantiques* of Abel Hermant. I once lent him an old paper-backed volume of Fromentin. A little later at Hatchard's he saw a copy of an édition de luxe beautifully bound, with Fromentin's illustrations. He immediately sent it to me with his best wishes and the motto, 'New lamps for old.'

When a new peer is created it is necessary first to submit the creation for His Majesty's approval and next to report for the King's information what title the peer wishes to adopt. I told him that Mr. Philip Stanhope proposes to take the title of Lord Weardale. 'He is losing his opportunity,' he said, 'if you are made a peer in time to come remember my advice and go up in the alphabet. There is some advantage in coming first in a list of names. An old college friend of mine, Abbott by name,

received a large cheque from his aunt when he passed an examination at Cambridge because she was so proud to see his name at the head of the list. I began life as a Campbell. I am now a C.-B. and if I changed again I should go up higher.'

'What did I consider the best of indoor games?' I thought, on the whole, chess. 'Chess, my dear fellow,' he said, 'is not a game but a disease! When I see people with their eyes straining for long minutes together, staring at a board with every symptom of acute mental distress, I can only pity them.'

V

Though he was a strong Liberationist and his political sympathies were with the Free Church, he had been brought up in the Established Church, and when in Scotland he and his wife regularly attended Meigle Parish Church, in which he had a pew in the east gallery. He was tolerant to all honest religious opinions, and often declared himself no dogmatist. But as between the Scottish and English Churches he expressed a strong preference for the democratic ways of the former. 'I think,' he used to say, 'we manage these things better in Scotland. The members of the congregation choose the minister themselves, and after a limited period they can reconsider their choice. In England the patron puts in his nominee, who may hold office for life to the great dissatisfaction of the parishioners.' When, as Prime Minister, he had to deal with preferment in the Church of England, he set his face against candidates whose only claim was that they were well-born or academically cultured. 'I have no patience,' he said warmly on one occasion, 'with professors of a religion founded by fishermen who think that the higher posts in the Church must be preserved for the highly born and the highly educated. I have little doubt that St. Peter dropped his h's and that our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount was uttered in the broadest Galilean dialect.' His one positive dislike in the religious sphere was for those Anglican ritualists whom he thought to be sailing under false colours. But here again his objection was partly a democratic dislike of the idea of a mediating priest standing, as he expressed it, 'between the individual

and his Creator, claiming to reserve sacraments, and to have the right of introducing the laity to the Deity as if they were a purified caste.' He suspected the theological side of Mr. Gladstone's character, and used to recall rather maliciously how at a ministerial dinner of one of his Cabinets, a discussion arose as to which one among them was likeliest to go to heaven, and nobody suggested Mr. Gladstone. 'If my only chance,' he added once in telling this story, 'were to trust to the company of some one else, I would sooner hang on to the coat-tails of old Spencer Walpole,[1] who never made any parade of religion, than any one else I know.'

He was popularly supposed to devote an abundance of leisure to the reading of French novels. He did undoubtedly read a great many of them, and was an enthusiastic admirer of the French masters, Balzac, Flaubert, De Maupassant, many years before they were discovered and generally acclaimed in this country. But his reading was by no means confined to fiction, and he browsed on all sorts of literature, English, French, and Italian. At one time he started a commonplace book, and for several years he was in the habit of writing out on stray slips of paper any pithy or epigrammatic passage which struck his fancy. A few examples of these may help to throw light on his taste and thoughts :—

Il y a quelqu'un de plus fanatique que celui qui dit la messe : c'est celui qui empêche de la dire.—ROBESPIERRE.

Il y a toujours dans l'audience une majorité qui n'y apprend rien, et une minorité qui n'y comprend rien.—EDMOND ABOUT.

The sober second thought of the people is seldom wrong and always efficient.—PRESIDENT VAN BAREN.

Il ne faut jamais faire plus de bruit qu'une chose ne le mérite. —FREDERICK THE GREAT, quoted by Voltaire.

A Lion is a den of Daniels.

When Meyerbeer died, Raff, then a young man, wrote a funeral march. Before publishing it, he submitted it to Rossini: 'Maestro, what do you think of it? . . . 'Mon jeune ami, quel

[1] Sir Spencer Walpole, Home Secretary, 1866-68.

dommage que ce n'était pas vous qui étiez mort, et Meyerbeer qui écrivait une marche funèbre.'

Daniel O'Connell said to Mr. Gladstone that Joseph Hume would have been a more effective speaker if he could have avoided beginning a new sentence before he had finished the last but one. (Mr. G., 28/9/93.)

Les hommes sont si nécessairement fous que ce serait être fou, par un autre tour de folie, que de ne pas être fou.—PASCAL.

M. THIERS, of the Comte de Paris.—De loin il a l'air d'un Allemand, de près d'un imbécile.

Il n'avait pas cette effroyable patience de l'ambition, qui souffre tout, se sert de tout, qui se couche plus tard que le vice et se lève plus tôt que la vertu.—AUGUSTE FILON, of Prosper Mérimée.

ἀμαθία μὲν θράσος, λογισμὸς δὲ ὄκνον φέρει.—THUCYDIDES, quoted by Pliny.

Tenez ferme ! Au théâtre, comme partout, les cabales ne réussissent que lorsque ceux qui en sont menacés les prennent au sérieux.—P. SALIS.

De tous les labeurs le plus pénible est celui de cacher l'ennui qu'on nous cause.—CRÉQUEY.

Il existe des services si grands qu'ils ne peuvent se payer que par l'ingratitude.—A. DUMAS.

Les hommes obéissent parfois à ceux qui les font rire, jamais à ceux dont ils sourient. E. LAUNY, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1896.

Il a les idées d'hier et les modes de demain.—GYP.

L'amour qu'on inspire est le miroir du cœur que l'on a.—C. MEUDE.

Leur aboiement ne prouve qu'une chose, c'est que nous sommes à cheval.—GOETHE, quoted by Max Nordau.

We made a great mistake in the beginning of our struggle. . . . We appointed all our worst generals to command the Armies, and all our best generals to edit the newspapers.—Confederate General LEE.

Le vrai est le père, qui engendra le bon, qui est le fils ; d'où procède le beau qui est le Saint Esprit.—CHATEAUBRIAND.

Mlle. Cariste ne soupçonnait même pas l'amour, la curiosité

CHAP. XXI. 1886-1908.

et l'ambition—cette triple concupiscence qui est l'effet du péché original. *Maison du Péché.*—MARCELLE TINAYRE.

Un maréchal du 2e Empire assurait que pour réussir, il faut posséder trois choses, le savoir, le savoir-vivre et le savoir-faire.—V. CHERBULIEZ.

Chi t'accarezza più di quel che suole o t' ha ingannato o ingannar ti vuole.[1]

More than once he puzzled his friends by saying in a mysterious way, 'Chi t'accarezza—my favourite proverb.'

Though not in the least pedantic, he loved these little embroideries in common talk, and was always precise and careful in his use of language. In literature his taste was for the flavoured and pithy, and he rejoiced in the neat craftsmanship of the French writers. I have heard a Frenchman say that he was one of the half-dozen Englishmen who spoke French like a Frenchman, and he was also quite fluent in Italian, though less so in German. His handwriting is a pleasure to read, and he was always most conscientious in answering letters. But he wrote slowly and seldom at length; a brief note asking his correspondent to come and see him was more often than not his answer to a long letter. For many years of his life he was thought easy-going to the point of indolence, and certainly he never worried himself about things that he thought unimportant or strove consciously for any prize. But he was by nature of a courteous and kindly disposition, which led him to take the same pains to please the humblest of his friends and neighbours as the most distinguished of his colleagues. One of the pleasures of association with him was that he seemed always to be totally unaware that he was an important man.

[1] He who makes himself more agreeable to you than is his wont has either deceived you or wishes to deceive you.

CHAPTER XXII

LIBERAL UNITY AND CONSERVATIVE REACTION

The Education Bill—Its Origin—The Cockerton Judgment and its Consequences—The Bills of 1901—Taking up the Challenge—The 'Registration Duty' on Corn—Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Interpretation—Campbell-Bannerman's Comment—Mr. Chamberlain's Birmingham Speech—Sir Michael Hicks Beach's Attitude—Resignation of Lord Salisbury—Mr. Balfour as Prime Minister—The Turn of the Tide—Difficulties at Liberal Headquarters—Illness of Lady Campbell-Bannerman—Letters from Baden-Baden—a Constructive Education Policy—Return to London—A Word to the Liberal League—Lord Rosebery and 'Definite Separation'—Criticisms of Campbell-Bannerman—His Advantages and Disadvantages—The Education Bill passed—Nonconformist Resentment—Mr. Chamberlain's Intentions.

SOUTH AFRICA being temporarily disposed of, the whole energy of the Liberal Party was now concentrated on the Education Bill and the Corn Tax. The Education question had grown suddenly into a formidable party issue out of the seemingly unimportant Cockerton judgment, whereby the Courts had decided that School Boards were going beyond their power in maintaining science and art schools and classes. Cockerton, whose name is immortalised in this suit, was a Local Government Board auditor, who had surcharged the School Board for expenditure under these heads, and the judges had decided that he was right. The case had been taken up by a Committee of which Lord Hugh Cecil was chairman, and which made no secret of its desire to clip the wings of the School Boards. It succeeded better than its authors knew or perhaps intended, for the immediate result was to threaten the complete stoppage of the education of about 150,000 scholars who were attending science and art schools or

CHAP. XXII. 1902.

classes under the School Board. Another result was that, while the Voluntary Schools could continue their science and art classes and draw the Government grants available for them, the School Boards, if this judgment stood, would be strictly confined to elementary education and forbidden to go beyond it.

The Legislature, clearly, was bound to do something; and if the question could have been handled without partisanship, the opportunity of establishing an efficient and orderly system of secondary education might have been welcomed by all education reformers. But the religious question was involved in it from the beginning, and before the session of 1901 was out it was clear that the occasion was to be used not for reforming secondary education, but for disestablishing the School Boards and improving the position of the Voluntary Schools. But the Government were not ready with their plans in 1901, and floundered deeply in their attempts to fill the gap. They introduced two Bills, the first of which (setting up Education Committees of County Councils to carry on the work for which the School Boards were disqualified) had to be abandoned in face of the opposition it provoked; and the second of which was a merely temporary measure permitting the School Boards to carry on for a year, with the significant condition attached that they should obtain the permission of the County Council or other local authorities within whose area the offending schools or classes were held. Even for the one year the School Boards were to be reminded that they had no jurisdiction except with the indulgence of these other authorities.

It was generally supposed in these days that Scotsmen were congenitally incapable of understanding English Education, and Campbell-Bannerman was not expected to take a very lively interest in these intricate matters. But it was not for nothing that he had lived through and taken part in the great fight of 1871, and, where School Boards were concerned, he was to the core an old English Liberal. From the first moment he was on the alert, and when

Education Bill No. 1 was introduced he immediately sounded a note of alarm. He saw at once that what was contemplated was 'a revolution in the whole educational machinery of the country,' for the word had already gone out that this seemingly innocent new authority for secondary education was in the future to have entrusted to it the whole of the primary as well as the secondary education of the country. 'Whatever objections,' he told the House (June 11, 1901), 'we may find to the Bill within its own limits and as it stands, these objections are very much increased and the difficulty made much greater when we remember that it is merely the first stage in the process which is to be continued further. It is natural that we should like to be quite sure of the depth of the pool of water before we step into it.' The objections to committing Parliament to an educational revolution on a side-issue were so obviously reasonable, and the threat of 'prolonged and serious controversy in the House' so little to the liking of the Government, that Bill No. 1 was abandoned and Bill No. 2 adopted as a means of carrying over the controversy till the following year.

The question simmered all through the autumn and winter of 1901, but the Government had sentenced the School Boards to death and were determined that there should be no more than a temporary reprieve. Their Bill, introduced by Mr. Balfour on March 24, 1902, confirmed the worst anticipations of Liberals and Nonconformists. The new authority—the County and Borough Councils acting through an Education Committee constituted on a scheme to be approved by the Board of Education—was empowered to abolish and take over the whole work of the School Boards and to 'control all secular education' in Voluntary Schools. This phrase covered an extremely favourable bargain with the latter schools. The 'controlling' authority, though required to maintain the school out of the rates, could only appoint one-third of its managers, and in regard to the appointment of teachers were given nothing but a veto, which was not to be exercised 'except on

CHAP. XXII. 1902.

educational grounds.' In return for total maintenance out of the rates, the Voluntary managers had only to provide the building and keep it in repair, and to make such alterations and improvements as the Education Committee might 'reasonably require.' By the time this scheme was launched, secondary education had all but disappeared from the scene. The Bill did nothing except provide in a vague way that the new Committees might 'supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary.' Manifestly the main object of the Bill was to get rid of the 'godless School Boards'; and, as Mr. Balfour himself frankly stated, to put the Voluntary School on a solid and permanent basis.[1]

There could have been no more defiant challenge to Liberals and Nonconformists, and the reply was an instant call to arms. Nonconformists had been far from satisfied with the compromise of 1870, but it had never occurred to them that the situation would be turned against them by the abolition of the School Boards and the quartering of the Voluntary Schools on the rates. In vain they protested that no such measure was dreamt of by the electors who in 1900 had been asked to vote for the Government on the issue of the South African war. No prudent man, as Mr. Birrell reminded them, would put a Tory Government in power for seven years and expect nothing to happen. Campbell-Bannerman counselled resistance from the first stage to the last, and spoke his mind fully to a deputation from the National Free Churches Union which waited on him on April 26:—

What is there in the Bill from beginning to end to secure better teaching than in the former Board Schools? . . . There is no improvement to Education secured, there is no co-ordination secured, there is no 'single authority' secured, there is no popular control secured; there is less even than under previous proposals and there is no truce to sectarian strivings and machinations. I should object to any Education Bill which is really a mere Church Bill in disguise as this is; but I would object all the more

[1] Mr. Balfour, House of Commons, Oct. 31, 1902.

to an Education Bill which was not, after all, a Bill for education. What is our duty? It is to oppose this Bill with all our might in the House of Commons and in the country. In the House, I think I can say with a pretty confident spirit the Liberal Party will be united not only in opposition to the Bill, but in a strong, fervid and strenuous opposition.

The sequel justified this prognostication. The Bill was fought all through the summer in the House and only carried under guillotine closure in an autumn sitting. In the meantime, Lord Rosebery vied with Campbell-Bannerman in denouncing it on the platform, and Mr. Asquith, Mr. Bryce, Mr. Lloyd George, and Sir Henry Fowler joined forces in opposing it in the House. All the legal talent and all the experts of the party were enlisted to frame amendments, and invaluable aid was given by Mr. Arthur Acland, the Minister for Education in the 1892 Parliament, who returned to the councils of the party for this occasion.

II

The controversy on the Corn Tax went on simultaneously. Here was the germ of the great struggle which was to convulse the Unionist Party in the following years, and the Liberal leaders were quick to see its importance. All the old Liberalism in Campbell-Bannerman was revolted by this proposal. He saw profane hands laid on the ark of the Covenant. It was bad enough that School Boards should be extinguished, but incredible that the Corn Laws should be restored. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer, was no Protectionist, and it became clear in after days that he little understood what a fire he had kindled when to square his war Budget he proposed to raise two and a half millions by a tax on corn and flour. He called it a 'registration' duty on corn, and announced that, as such, it would be a permanent and valuable part of our fiscal system, to which none but pedants would object. Money was needed, direct taxation was exhausted, and 'the basis of taxation must be broadened.' It sounded plausible, but the instant warm approval of

the Protectionist group told its own story, and the public judged that Mr. Chaplin, Mr. Lowther, and Sir Howard Vincent would scarcely have been moved to enthusiasm by so innocent a proposal. Why, it was asked, if there was no protection in it, should there not have been an excise duty on home-grown corn and flour?

Then various unexpected things began to happen. Sir Michael had explained that his tax amounted to only one-third of a penny on the quartern loaf, and would undoubtedly be paid by the foreigner or the importer. But the bakers refused to take that view of it and instantly clapped a halfpenny on to the loaf, thus advertising the tax in the humblest households. Next Sir Wilfrid Laurier made a speech in the Canadian Dominion Parliament:—

He was going to England to discuss commercial relations on the invitation of the Imperial Government, and he could not conceive that Mr. Chamberlain would invite the Colonial representatives to discuss that subject unless the British Government had something to propose. There was now a duty on wheat and flour which placed Canada in a position to make offers which she could not make in 1897. A step had been taken which would make it possible to obtain preference for Canadian goods.—(Published in London, May 13, 1902.)

So Canada was going to ask for a preference on the Corn Tax. The presumption now arose that the 'Registration Duty' was the thin end of the wedge for the new Colonial policy which rumour had for some months past been attributing to Mr. Chamberlain. Campbell-Bannerman was quick to seize the point, and the debate on the second reading of the Finance Bill gave him an opportunity of challenging the Government after the cabled summary of Sir Wilfrid's speech had appeared in London:—

Sir Wilfrid says he could not conceive the invitation to a Conference unless there was something to propose. Is this the beginning of the something? Is this the foundation laid for that something? I have observed that throughout these discussions the Secretary of State for the Colonies has not been prominently present. We are entitled to demand to know now in the clearest

terms, is this your policy? Is this policy which the Prime Minister of Canada, in the interests of his country, naturally and properly foreshadows, to be the policy of our Government? Are the free ports of England to be shut up by preferential duties? This would be a tremendous departure from the traditional policy of the country, and we are not going to have it smuggled into existence in the form of this innocuous, little, imperceptible, intangible duty on corn. This aspect of the case gives an importance to the case before us even greater than that which it had before. There was a strong case before. Now there is an urgent, an imperious, a vehement case. I repeat the demand to know whether this is the policy which you intend that the House of Commons and the country should adopt.—(May 13.)

He spoke even better than he knew, for Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as we have since learnt, had pitched a hot shot into the inner circle of the Cabinet. The Corn Tax was undoubtedly, in Mr. Chamberlain's view, to be the 'something' of which Sir Wilfrid Laurier had spoken, the foundation laid for a developing and extending policy of preference. But other members of the Cabinet had accepted it on Sir Michael Hicks Beach's certificate of innocence, and were determined that it should have no such consequence or implication. The conflict between the two parties began from this moment, and its signs were visible in the debate of May 13. Mr. Balfour was plainly uneasy, but he evaded Campbell-Bannerman's challenge by asserting that Sir Wilfrid's mission had 'absolutely nothing, direct or indirect, to do with this tax,' and repeating that it was put on 'for fiscal reasons.' Three days later (May 16), Mr. Chamberlain spoke at Birmingham, and left no mistake as to what he desired. His method of declaring himself took, characteristically, the form of an attack on the Opposition leader:—

On the last day of the discussion in the House of Commons, the leader of the opposition, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, told us that this tax had another and a most dangerous aspect. It was the thin end of the wedge, it was the beginning of a new policy of which he spoke with bated breath and in tones of horror. And what do you think the new policy is to which he

CHAP. XXII. 1902.

thinks this new tax may lead? It is the possibility of preferential relations with our Colonies. He quoted a statement of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the distinguished and patriotic Prime Minister of Canada, in which he referred to the approaching Conferences in London and expressed his hope that they would lead to closer commercial relations. Ah! but here Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman scents mischief. What? Closer relations between the mother country and the Colonies! Cobden, Cobden whom he professes to follow, the great free-trader, made a reciprocity treaty with France, but the idea of a reciprocity treaty with our own children—that fills the mind of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman with disgust which he is only able ineffectively to express; and in this he shows once more that lack of imagination, that lack of foresight, which distinguishes and always has distinguished the little Englander and the little Scotchman. We are not going to adopt his fears.

Here, then, the intention was plainly declared, so far as the Corn Tax was concerned, but Mr. Chamberlain was not content with that. He leapt ahead to an entire change of policy to meet what he declared to be the new dangers threatening British trade from modern conditions:—

The position of this country is not without anxiety to statesmen and careful observers. The political jealousy of which I have spoken, the commercial rivalry, more serious than anything we have yet had, the pressure of hostile tariffs, the pressure of bounties, the pressure of subsidies, it is all becoming more weighty and more apparent. What is the object of this system adopted by countries which at all events are very prosperous themselves—countries like Germany and other large continental States? What is the object of all this policy of bounties and subsidies? It is admitted—there is no secret about it—the intention is to shut out this country as far as possible from all profitable trade with those foreign States and at the same time to enable those foreign States to undersell us in British markets. That is the policy, and we see that it is assuming a great development, that old ideas of trade and free competition have changed. We are faced with great combinations, with enormous trusts having behind them gigantic wealth. Even the industries and commerce which we thought to be peculiarly our own, even those are in danger. It is quite impossible that these new methods of competition can be met by adherence to old and

antiquated methods which were perfectly right at the time they were developed. At the present moment the Empire is being attacked on all sides and in our isolation we must look to ourselves. We must draw closer our internal relations, the ties of sentiment, the ties of sympathy—yes, and ties of interest. If by adherence to economic pedantry, to old shibboleths, we are to lose opportunities of closer union which are offered us by our Colonies; if we are to put aside occasions now within our grasp; if we do not take every chance in our power to keep British trade in British hands, I am certain that we shall deserve the disasters which will infallibly come upon us.

Like the overture to an opera, this passage contained in itself all the themes which were to be developed in the subsequent acts. Within a very few days it became evident that Mr. Chamberlain's challenge, though in form addressed to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been intended quite as much for his own colleagues, among whom also there were 'Little Englanders' and 'Little Scotchmen.' The Cabinet were visibly disturbed by this forcing of their hand, and most of all Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who had to face an unceasing fire of questions in the House of Commons. On June 9 he made a speech which all parties agreed in thinking unintelligible, but on the 18th he braved Mr. Chamberlain's wrath by declaring it to be 'an extraordinary delusion' to suppose that the Government intended to 'change the principles upon which the fiscal system of this country is based':—

I have told the House plainly that on behalf of my colleagues I entirely disavow any idea of that kind through this tax. I have said that it is not our policy to endeavour to encourage trade with our colonies by initiating a tariff war with all those foreign countries who are our largest and greatest customers. That idea is the most perfect delusion that can be conceived.

Sir Michael went on to argue that it was impossible that a policy of Colonial Preference could be founded on a tax so small as the tax on corn, and that any Canadian statesman could wish to face the difficulties that would be raised with the United States for so slight an advantage.

The argument was sound but it was in the teeth of the Birmingham speech, and, as his party were soon to discover, 'what Mr. Chamberlain had said, he had said.'

III

The Corn Duty passed the House of Commons on June 18, and for the time being the controversy was broken off by more dramatic events: the serious illness of King Edward, the postponement of the Coronation, the resignation of Lord Salisbury and the succession of Mr. Balfour to the position of Prime Minister and leader of the Unionist Party, which was announced in both Houses of Parliament on July 14. Campbell-Bannerman had only a slight acquaintance with Lord Salisbury, but he had always an unfeigned respect for his character and qualities of mind, and, like not a few Liberals of this time, had come to regard him as a kindred spirit in his general attitude to foreign affairs, so far as adverse circumstances and party traditions permitted. It was his honest belief that if 'old Sarum,' as he called him, and not the pushful Colonial Secretary, had conducted the negotiations with the Boers there would have been no war. So, in his tribute to him in the House of Commons, he said exactly what he felt:—

I cannot say that Lord Salisbury has ever shown any partiality towards the party with which I am connected—but though he has often been a strenuous antagonist, and has sometimes thrown a good deal of that cold water which he is capable of throwing upon the ardent aspirations of the Liberal Party, yet I can at least say this, that in his dealings with foreign affairs and with international questions, he has again and again earned our applause and approval and confidence.

A grateful salute to the new Prime Minister completed the ritual on this occasion. Mr. Balfour, in spite of urgent advice offered to him from many quarters, made the fewest possible changes in the Administration. But unquestionably the balance of power had been shifted. With Lord Salisbury went Sir Michael Hicks Beach, claiming his discharge as a veteran at the end of the South African war.

There were no available recruits from the Conservative side to balance this withdrawal of the elder statesmen. The promotion of Mr. Ritchie to be Chancellor of the Exchequer had great significance later, but it passed as a humdrum appointment at the time. Mr. Austen Chamberlain entered the Cabinet as Postmaster-General and Mr. Wyndham as Chief Secretary for Ireland. Sir John Gorst, whose quizzical insubordination had long afforded the House of Commons a somewhat puzzling form of entertainment, gave place to Sir William Anson as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, of which Lord Londonderry was rather oddly appointed President. The Duke of Devonshire succeeded Lord Salisbury as leader of the House of Lords. Mr. Chamberlain remained at the Colonial Office.

The public could not at once appreciate the meaning of these changes, but it felt instinctively that the old order was passing. The education system was being uprooted, the people's bread was being taxed, the most forcible member of the Administration was openly preaching protection. The new Prime Minister was beyond question a brilliant debater and dialectician, but he seemed a lightweight compared with the Colonial Secretary. The country was already uneasy at the signs of a reaction which it had in no way authorised at the election of 1900, and had given the Government a shrewd knock at the by-election at Bury in the month of May, when a Conservative majority of over 900 was turned into a Liberal majority of more than 400. An even more striking result followed at North Leeds, which, a fortnight after Mr. Balfour had formed his Administration, converted a Conservative majority of 2517 into a Liberal majority of 758. This to the Opposition was like rain from heaven upon a parched and thirsty land. The long spell of popular disfavour was at last broken, and the future seemed suddenly to be full of hope. Sanguine spirits forgot the great parliamentary majority with which the Government was entrenched, and speculated confidently on a speedy close to Mr. Balfour's reign.

CHAP. XXI.

1902.

IV

Certainly there had been a dramatic change since the beginning of the year. The dispirited and divided factions which then seemed to be sitting in the ruins of what was once the Liberal Party had become a spirited, pugnacious, and, so far as the rank and file were concerned, a united force. But the difficulties continued at headquarters, and the Liberal League had abated none of its activities. Especially it was reported to be in touch with the constituencies, and to be promoting candidates of its own colour in competition with the official party. This was irritating, but to Campbell-Bannerman personally the greater difficulty lay in the attitude of Lord Rosebery, who had quitted his lonely furrow for an energetic campaign in company with other Liberals against the Corn Tax and the Education Bill. His speeches had all the qualities that attract public attention—they flashed with wit and epigram, and, on these themes at all events, gave the combative politician without reserve all that his heart could desire. The newspapers were agreed that he was definitely coming back into public life, and, though entirely loyal to Campbell-Bannerman, large numbers of party men were strongly of opinion that bygones should be bygones and all obstacles removed which could prevent his powerful aid from being available for the Liberal cause. To Campbell-Bannerman the case was scarcely so simple. The 'definite separation' letter was barely three months old and its author showed no signs of having repented of it. He had propounded a new cause of difference on the Irish question, which if glossed over for the moment might be full of difficulty in the near future. Campbell-Bannerman was modest and tolerant on all matters that touched his personal position, but it could scarcely be agreeable to him that his own intimates should be publicly associated with the one prominent Liberal who was to all appearances challenging his leadership. All these difficulties and embarrassments are seen in a correspondence with the Chief Whip on the latter's prospective

appearance at Leeds at a meeting at which Lord Rosebery was to be the principal star. 'What impresses me,' he writes, 'is that our loyal people throughout the country will be completely bamboozled when they see the leading officials of the party joining, *not on some particular subject*, but in general politics with one who has publicly cried off from us. . . . They will think the whole thing a farce.' Mr. Gladstone replied that attending the meeting which was called by the Liberal Association was, from his point of view, as one of the members for Leeds, the lesser evil. 'To stay away would be to throw the party locally into confusion and greatly to accentuate the differences with the Liberal Leaguers. . . . How, having preached unity, could he publicly decline co-operation on questions on which they were all agreed?' 'Surely,' he writes, 'R.'s petulant outburst in his letter cannot be allowed to stand in the way when the first necessity is the widest and strongest protest against the Education Bill, the Corn Tax, and all that is likely to follow the latter.' This was good sense politically, but Campbell-Bannerman was unconvinced, though he wisely forbore to pursue the matter.

All through this summer his wife's health had been an incessant cause of anxiety to him, and, having wound up his House of Commons work with a speech on the Colonial Office vote, he took her by the usual easy stages to Marienbad at the end of July. Having placed her there in charge of Dr. Ott he took the long journey back to London for the postponed Coronation on August 9, and started again for Marienbad the following day. Where his wife's health was concerned he was unsparing of himself, and without a moment's hesitation he undertook these fatiguing journeys lest her cure should be postponed or she should be compelled to go unaccompanied. Marienbad proved a disappointment. 'We have lived like hermits,' he writes in the last week of August. 'My wife enormously better in health, but every night torn with excruciating pain and

CHAP. XXII. 1902.

getting no sleep. This last night for the first time she has had some respite, but it may not last. . . . Ott has exhausted himself for remedies, but in vain. My hope is that when we go away the better condition of health will enable her to throw off the pain.' I told Ott yesterday he must be ready to tell me of a suitable place to go to—any place that is warm, sunny, sedative but not depressing, comfortable, with good food, lively, interesting and convenient.' Dr. Ott took a week to discover this paradise, and in the meantime his companions, as he records, were 'mainly Eddy Stanley and McCalmont, both very amiable fellows, and the former especially frank and very near our view of most things.' He had the pleasure of telling them the news of the Sevenoaks election, in which a Tory majority of nearly 5000 had been reduced to something less than 900. Dr. Ott decided for Baden-Baden, but for a week they were unable to get beyond Vienna, and September was well advanced before the new cure could begin. Of his wife he writes that 'she can hardly walk at all, and is so weakened in nerve and through want of sleep that she can hardly rise from her chair without help.' In a postscript he adds, 'I fear this gives rather a gloomy account of our outlook: but I have dreaded it for long, and I fear it is come. I mean not the political outlook, but my own personal position and immediate plans and future: it is a serious business.'

Lady Campbell-Bannerman improved a little at Baden-Baden, and he wrote in rather better spirits to the Chief Whip:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Herbert Gladstone

HOTEL STEPHANIE, BADEN-BADEN, *Sept.* 22, '02.—Your letter of the 20th has run me to earth here. We have had a terrible time for the last few weeks: my wife having suffered horribly from her neuritis, which fastened mainly on the sciatic nerve, and made her almost unable to walk and turned all that ought to have been sleeping hours into hours of excruciating torture. The Marienbad waters greatly benefited her general health, but did nothing to modify this particular pain, and I suspect that the Bohemian air (2000 feet over sea-level) aggravated it. We

were at our wits' end until we thought of coming here, a week ago, and whether it is the soothing climate and the treatment that does her good, or whether the thing is wearing itself out, she is undoubtedly better. We have a charming doctor, a superlative hotel—the best I ever lived in—and a masseuse whom the Dr. pronounces the best he ever knew. We are therefore so far set up that I can entirely count on being in London a few days before the play opens, which a fortnight ago seemed impossible.

What you say confidentially as to political prospects is most interesting. Evidently the Government are in a hole. Even if the subject was not such a battleground, in what 'autumn Sittings' can they expect to pass all the clauses of this Bill, its Report Stage, some S.A. finance, the new Rules of Procedure (making them permanent), manifold interruptions, Irish and other?

As to the Education Bill itself, I hope our people will stand no compromise, but take a bold line against the whole scheme. I am sure we shall come to grief if we do not take a strong line, and I have sometimes thought that it would be well for me to engineer a speech before Parliament meets in order to avoid our hands being forced or our people getting into a tangle. But at present I am rather inclined to leave it alone and let A. J. B. clear up his own mess, and not to give him any general scheme of ours (vague of course) to exercise his dialectics upon and so divert attention from his own fiasco. As he is to speak so close before the meeting there would be no room to follow him even if it was desirable. The firmer we are, and the higher the line we take, the safer we shall be.

My meeting engagements are only Ayr on the 29th Oct. (Sc. Lib. Association, Tweedmouth presiding), and Skipton somewhere in the early days of December. I expect I shall have to speak to my own constituents some time. I hardly see where Walthamstow can conveniently come in. I have also promised Welby to speak at a Cobden Club dinner probably in November.

I hear that the Leaguers have been very busy especially in Scotland—Ronald and Mr. Douglas untiring—not only 'doing the work of an evangelist' (which is comparatively innocent provided of course they have any evangel) but particularly doing the work of a whip. Candidates and seats reciprocally offered and arranged, etc., etc. This sort of thing is intolerable, and when seen alongside of their public protestations of loyalty to the Party it is unworthy of honest men. . . .

We shall be here certainly for another week: anything longer

will depend on weather. When the autumn rains set in in this part of Europe they go on for a week or two hopelessly.

I hope you have had a good time, maintained if not raised the standard of your golf, and laid in lots of health. You have been like Samson among the Philistines, although friendly ones: but that is not an unusual fate for us all! Any casuals I had at Marienbad were Tories, but I sucked no small comfort out of them, especially after Sevenoaks!

In spite of his inclination not to provide A. J. B. with a target, his mind during these days was busy on a scheme to be set up as an alternative to the Government Education Bill, and he despatched the outline of it to Captain Sinclair:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Capt. Sinclair

BADEN-BADEN, *Sept.* 24, '02.—Is it not time and urgent that we should do more regarding this Education question than sit on our hurdies and denounce the Bill? Evidently the Non-Cons. are worked up to a heat they have never been in before. That heat is maintained—*vide* Leeds moor meeting, *vide* Clifford's letters. It is gathering rather than dwindling. The Tories are sick over it, compromise will be proposed. I am for no compromise.

A bargain was made in 1870 (as to which much could be said). The Church people have broken it. It is they by their pretensions that have opened the question. They want the predominance of a sect in schools paid for by the nation. The thing is impracticable; denominational authority and public control won't row in the same boat. No halves or thirds or fiftieths on the managing board will do. From our discussions it must be plain to the stupidest that the two things are incompatible. Why, then, should we not be bold and take a logical ground?

1. Public control by elected bodies in suitable areas (not necessarily parishes).

2. State education secular.

3. But, recognising the desire for religious instruction as strong and general, either

(*a*) Give in public schools a neutral Christian instruction, and let sects have opportunities of adding special tenets if desired.

(*b*) Give no religious instruction but leave sects free as above.

Personally I favour (*b*) because (*a*) is illogical, and in my opinion a statutory common creed is as wrong (and more silly) as a statutory specific creed.

But something of this sort.

Would the Non-Cons. stand it? Would they rise to it? Would the weak-kneed be bullied into it? Even if we were beaten we should be on sound ground. It would be gall and wormwood to the Haldane and Co. Council philosophers. *Tant mieux.*

Two foundation stones :—

(*a*) Political, democratic self-government. Save the school boards ; go on known lines—trust the people, etc., etc.

(*b*) Conscience—prevent proselytism and ecclesiasticism.

They are writing now of a probable dissolution. Would this not be the best ground for us to stand on and not a mere ragging at the Government Bill.

I have written in this sense to Bryce and shall probably dose Spencer. I have half a mind to write to Clifford, who seems to me to be far the manliest of the Non-Cons.

We are in as good spirits as are compatible with so dull a life as we lead. Better nights, less pain, excellent masseuse, delightful doctor—but these think a real cure will be a long process. Depressing but soothing climate, beautiful place ; the best hotel and food I have ever found. You really must come.

From the point of view of political strategy, the second thoughts which withheld this scheme were undoubtedly the wiser. The Opposition, sufficiently united in resistance to the Government scheme, were not in the mood and had not the opportunity to work out these intricate alternatives to an agreed conclusion.

The hopes raised at Baden were short-lived, and he reports his patient as 'nearly finished' by the return journey to Paris. At Paris there was a further halt while another physician was consulted. He writes to Captain Sinclair :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Capt. Sinclair

PARIS, *Oct.* 12, '02.—I am more bewildered and puzzled about my wife. I do not know what we can do. She seems to me to be suffering more, and is more broken, though in some respects

CHAP. XXII. 1902. physically stronger. At present she can neither lie in bed nor sit up (constant pain), and absolutely cannot be left. The Dr. here, a very peremptory person, has just put her under a three days' treatment, which expires on Tuesday morning—too late for getting even to Calais that day. He takes a somewhat different view from the Baden doctor. He says this will test it, and then if we come back by and by and stay three weeks for a regular course of cure, he answers for success. His acolyte, a masseuse, corroborates him, and they really seem to know all about it. But ?

VI

He reached London finally on the 18th, two days after the reassembling of Parliament, but in time to put in a strong word for the Irish on a motion for adjournment, moved by Mr. O'Brien, to 'call attention to the government of Ireland by coercion.'

Ten days later (Oct. 29) he spoke to a great meeting at Ayr, and once again declared his unshaken belief in Home Rule and detestation of coercion. In the same speech he renewed his appeal for unity, and made a comment which was generally construed as aimed at the Liberal League :—

No one would desire to impose or think of imposing upon Liberals any rigid discipline of opinion. Any such attempt would be resented and properly resented, because we are above all others the party of freedom of view, and it has been in our past experience not only a legitimate but a most wholesome thing that those among us who share some strong view upon a particular question should co-operate with each other in the advocacy of those views. We have had the Anti-Corn Law League, we have seen the Liberation Society. We have seen the Anti-Slavery Society. We have seen the Peace Society, although that is not entirely of one Party; we have the Temperance Associations and Organisations of all shades. All of them work for their own purpose, but assisting in harmonising with the work of the party at large. But while I have neither the right nor certainly the intention to prescribe their duty to other people, yet standing here as I do as the president—the elected president —of an Association which in representative fashion stands for

the Liberalism of Scotland, not to speak of my other capacity of being the appointed leader of the Liberals in the House of Commons, I should be untrue to my duty if I were not to say that nothing but harm and paralysis to the common cause can arise from the action of any body of men among us, however excellent their motives may be, who set themselves in antagonism to the other sections or to the main, central mass of the party, and interfere in this way with the work of the whole. Saying this I am merely repeating what I have said again and again without distinction or exception. We want all our force to meet the common enemy. Do not let us waste ourselves on smaller issues, do not let us refuse distinctions and run after will-o'-the-wisps of our own; and I am sure that in saying this here to-night I have the support and the sympathy, not only of every loyal and sound Liberal in this room, but of the overwhelming majority of Liberals throughout all the constituencies of England and Scotland alike.

In the meantime there had been published a correspondence which had passed between Lord Rosebery and Mr. A. W. Black, the Liberal M.P. for Banffshire, on the question of the former's relationship to Sir Henry. Lord Rosebery wrote specifically declining to withdraw his 'definite separation' formula:—

GOREBRIDGE, *Oct.* 8, 1902.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am obliged by your letter regarding your difficulty in attending the Meeting on Nov. 1. You say that I have intimated definite separation from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and that, in view of such an intimation, no self-respecting Liberal, professing as he does to follow Sir Henry, can at the same time 'support' me; and you proceed to point out that the position would be greatly changed were I to make it clear that the expression 'definite separation' only applied to a phase of controversy gone by.

Now, it would naturally give me pleasure to make such a declaration could I truthfully do so. But before making it, I need information on one essential point. In what respect has the situation changed since I wrote my letter? I adhere to the policy of the Chesterfield speech. I believe it to embody the only practical and sensible policy for the Liberal Party, or I should not have made it. Sir Henry banned and condemned the policy.

Hence my letter. Has Sir Henry withdrawn the ban or condemnation? If so, the situation is changed. If not, it is not.

As to the questions of office and leadership which you raise, they cannot and do not concern me. I have come forward to promote a policy; I have nothing to do with personal questions, and I will have nothing to do with them. If the Liberal Party would adopt the Chesterfield policy I would readily withdraw and leave it to others more competent and able to carry it out. But while I see what I believe to be the true policy excommunicated, I must remain. Let me correct you on one last point. The invitation does not ask you to support me but the policy. There is no question of supporting me. If you agree with the policy there are no personal questions to prevent you appearing at the meeting. If you do not, you would obviously be out of place. I hope that this letter may be helpful to you. At any rate I cannot make my meaning clearer.—Believe me, Yours faithfully,

ROSEBERY.

ALEX. W. BLACK, ESQ.

In a further letter Lord Rosebery declined to 'enlarge the bounds of our correspondence,' but contrived to put in that his private relations with Campbell-Bannerman were those of 'old and unimpaired friendship.' There were sanguine Liberals who construed even the first letter as an invitation to Campbell-Bannerman to say the word which would heal the breach, and he was not a little blamed for the seeming stubbornness of the silence which was his only reply. He was not prepared for further experiments after the Berkeley Square interview. The needed word must, in his opinion, have been the repudiation of Home Rule, and nothing would induce him to utter that. There remained, therefore, only silence or the renewal of the controversy, and he chose silence.

But his position was rendered none the easier by this episode. As between the two men Lord Rosebery had undoubtedly for the moment all the advantages. He was free from the unpopular associations which clung to Campbell-Bannerman and in high favour with the newspapers of both parties. His Chesterfield speech seemed to have pointed the way to the peace in South Africa, which

conformed almost exactly to his forecast. He, if any one, could conciliate the wavering voters, whose adhesion was supposed to be necessary to bring the Liberal Party back to power but who thought it less than reputable to be supporters of 'C.-B.' No man of this generation had a more complete equipment for public life than Lord Rosebery. He had the very rare art of catching the ear of the multitude with speeches which delighted the few with their literary dexterity. He had a genius for friendship which secured him a body of devoted adherents who were ready to follow him anywhere. His wit, his charm, his eminence in the sporting world, his prestige as an ex-Prime Minister gave him a position which no mere politician could rival; and the air of mystery which surrounded him added to the fascination. It was small wonder if dejected politicians who saw their party indefinitely excluded from power contrasted him with the battered and damaged figure of the very plain man who led them, and asked which of the two was the more likely to bring them into the promised land.

Apart from all questions of policy, there were practical grounds for discontent. Even the most loyal had misgivings about the effectiveness of the leadership in the House of Commons. Rich as had been the opportunities, the front bench was judged not to have made the most of them. The attack on the Government seemed to have passed from their hands to the back benches, to Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. McKenna, and the group of Radicals and Nonconformists who made the running on the Education Bill without reference to the leaders. The fact that those leaders were politically only just on speaking terms was bound to make itself felt in the conduct of the Opposition; and the rank and file concluded that, if these eminent people could not compose their quarrels, it must go its own way. This, for the most part, was not Campbell-Bannerman's fault, but it inevitably reflected on his leadership. He had not yet established himself as a commanding Parliamentarian, and with all his courage and steadiness he was ill equipped as a debater to meet the subtleties of Mr. Balfour or the

CHAP. sledge-hammer assaults of Mr. Chamberlain. Still less had he that stoic indifference to domestic circumstances which is part of the *æs triplex* of the ambitious public man. His place was often empty, and again and again a brief note from Grosvenor Place conveyed the intelligence that the state of his wife's health made it impossible for him to return to the House after dinner. Other members of the front bench followed his example without his excuse.

All through these weeks Lord Rosebery seemed to have the ball at his feet, and even the faithful centre grew restive. But Lord Rosebery had two great disadvantages. First, he was a peer, and it was exceedingly doubtful whether the Liberal Party would repeat the experiment of a peer Prime Minister. Next, his intentions were always in a haze of doubt. It is the necessary assumption of practical politicians that a man who plays a leading part in affairs as a critic and opponent of a Government will accept the responsibility of office if his criticism prevails; and the Liberal Leaguers who acknowledged Lord Rosebery's leadership took for granted that this was his intention. But here they were on very uncertain ground. No quest during the next three years was more baffling than the attempt to discover what Lord Rosebery would do if the Liberal Party came back to power. The question was put directly and indirectly, by colleagues, by friends, by intruding journalists, even by the Sovereign himself. Gallons of midnight oil were expended on it and hundreds of newspaper columns devoted to it by persons professing to know. But knowledge was never advanced by one inch up to the last hour before Mr. Balfour resigned. The door seemed both open and closed, and behind it was an enigma.

Whatever might be said for or against Campbell-Bannerman, there was nothing enigmatical about him. He stood stoutly for Liberal ideas understood in their simplest sense, and had proved his mettle by braving a storm of obloquy rather than yield an inch of his ground. He was working openly and avowedly to bring the Liberal Party back to power, and he was ready to play any part and shoulder any

responsibility which helped to that end. For himself he made no other claim than that he was here and now the leader of the party in the House of Commons, and with the greatest good humour he accepted the assumption that the Prime Ministership was an open question to be decided when the time came. This modesty was entirely genuine, but it did not extend to challenges to him in his own sphere. These he actively resented, and in a dozen ways he made it clear that he knew his friends and saw through his enemies. Politicians might complain of his lethargy or contrast his unhandiness in debate with the brilliant accomplishments of other men, but they gradually came to perceive that he had a deep and patient kind of political astuteness which judged men, measures, and situations with quite remarkable accuracy. That he was not to be dislodged was evident; that he was absolutely honest no one doubted; and that he was steering a course which, better than any other, promised to bring the Liberal ship into harbour became increasingly probable. Unquestionably the bulk of the party were with him in his refusal to substitute the Chesterfield policy for the Liberal faith. They were not prepared to give any individual a free hand to 'clean the Liberal slate,' and least of all one who habitually spoke of himself as detached from the Liberal Party. The man without a party is eventually as homeless in domestic politics as the cosmopolitan in international. It was Campbell-Bannerman's great advantage to be in the battle, while Lord Rosebery seemed always to be above it.

VII

The resumed session wore itself out in an exhausting struggle over the Education Bill. The Opposition fought gallantly, and many a rising politician on the back benches made his reputation in this fight, but the Bill passed without substantial alteration under the guillotine closure. Campbell-Bannerman spoke with Mr. Asquith to a crowded demonstration against it at the Alexandra Palace on November 1, and on December 3 he moved its rejection on the third

reading in an uncompromising speech which summed up all its errors and enormities from the Liberal point of view. The third reading was nevertheless carried by a majority of 152—a figure raised above the normal ministerial majority by the adhesion or abstention of the Irish members.

Outwardly the Government had won a great triumph in carrying this Bill. It was a daring stroke to use the majority gained at the Khaki election for this ruthless incursion into the preserves of orthodox Liberalism and Nonconformity, and Mr. Balfour surpassed himself in driving it home. Nothing in those days seemed to be more congenial to him than this particular kind of warfare. But the victory was won at great cost to the Unionist Party. Large numbers of Nonconformists had supported the Government at the 1900 election, and the iron entered their souls at seeing their votes used for their own undoing. Their resentment was quickly shown. In the six by-elections which had taken place since the Bill was introduced, two seats had been lost to the Government, and an aggregate Unionist majority of 8570 converted into a Liberal majority of 1912. More important still in its effect on the parliamentary situation, there was serious unrest at the headquarters of the Unionist Party. Large numbers of Liberal Unionists made no secret of the fact that they greatly disliked the Bill, and only supported it for the avoidance of party rupture.[1] Mr Chamberlain was with difficulty induced to issue an ambiguous apology for it, and his friends said openly that he thought it a disastrous strategical blunder. He left the House on his visit to South Africa before the final scene, and Campbell-Bannerman shrewdly conjectured that on the way out or the way home, if not actually on the illimitable veldt, his busy brain would be spinning new schemes to revive the fortunes of his party. It was not his way to sit down quietly and write finis after the chapter which had taken the lead out of his hands and shut the door on his succession to the highest office. In the meantime the

[1] See Lord George Hamilton's *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, pp. 317-18.

Government had got into other scrapes, and an astonished public awoke one morning to see it engaging with Germany in a debt-collecting expedition in Venezuela to the extreme annoyance of the United States. The Foreign Office, it appeared, had overlooked the Monroe Doctrine. 'We have nearly reached the end here,' Campbell-Bannerman wrote to his chairman on December 15, 'and characteristically we wind up with Clericalism, a blunder with the seed of a war in it, and fiscal reaction. A nice Christmas pie.'

Christmas was spent as usual at Belmont, and he was able to report a little better of his wife. 'There is a decided improvement within the last ten days, but she is still very weak and greatly suffering.' Her illness and his anxiety for her had been a serious handicap to him throughout this year.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE FISCAL CAMPAIGN

Speeches in Scotland—Doing the Constituency—The War Office and the War—Speech at Leeds—Friendship with Germany and France—The London Education Bill—Irish Land Purchase—Return of Mr. Chamberlain—Revival of the Fiscal Question—Scenes behind the Scenes—Withdrawal of the Corn Tax—Mr. Chamberlain's Retort—Campbell-Bannerman at Scarborough—A Caustic Comment—Going Slow—Pressure from the Back Benches—Interrupters and Interveners—Mr. Chaplin's Amendment—Mr. Balfour's Unsettled Convictions—A Message from New South Wales—Mr. Chamberlain's Propaganda—Complaints of the Liberal Rank and File—The Government 'Inquiry'—A Defence of Inaction.

CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

PARLIAMENT did not meet till the middle of February this year, and Campbell-Bannerman remained at Belmont for the greater part of January. But he had arranged a fairly active programme for this month. He spoke at length to a party of Scottish Liberals whom he invited to lunch with him on January 2, and made other speeches at Stirling on the 8th, and at Queensferry on the 16th. His themes were the settlement in South Africa, the Venezuelan question, which fortunately was on the way to a settlement by reference to the Hague Tribunal, Irish land purchase, on which the Government was supposed to be meditating a new departure, the state of finance, and a full budget of the Scottish questions which he never forgot in addressing his own countrymen. To his neighbours assembled at Belmont he gave a lively account of a meeting he had had at a dinner-table with General Botha and General Delarey, with—as he slyly added—a member of the Cabinet present 'so that it was quite safe.' He was always accessible in these times to the Boer leaders when

any of them happened to be visiting this country, and his wise, shrewd, and sympathetic advice helped them not a little to acceptance of the new order in South Africa. His general inference from his conversations with them was that 'there was no reason why the past should not be largely forgotten, provided they left them with the conviction that they were not to be meddled with.'

He wrote to Mr. Bryce at the end of January:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Bryce

6 GROSVENOR PLACE, *Jan.* 26, '03.—I had it in my mind to write to you this very day as ever was when your letter arrives.

We have just got up from Scotland, and I am glad to report considerable improvement in my wife. I really think now that we shall master and expel her pains: but she is desperately weak, as the result of these months of suffering. We shall be here more or less till Parliament meets: possibly going to the sea for ten days' blow.

I hope we shall easily get Tom Buchanan in for E. Perthshire, and he will be a most useful reinforcement. But there may be a drop in the majority.[1]

Like you I have seen nobody and heard nothing. I hardened my heart and thoroughly *did* my constituency, which is a good thing over. There was desperately little of novelty but never have I been so well received, and I feel as a man feels when he leaves a barber's shop: or (may I say) a confessional; which is much the same thing.

Evidently Joe will return in triumph, and it will not be altogether easy to be decently appreciative, while avoiding any part in the chorus.

I regard Joe as the very embodiment of all that is bad in policy and spirit: of all that will wreck and ruin our country, and nothing will bring me to say anything else. It is not himself personally or his peculiarities that I object to, but what he stands for politically. The present wave in his favour may be almost as bad as the war fever, and if our friends the Leaguers join his procession of course all is at an end.

Have you seen J. A. Hobson on Imperialism? It is the most trenchant thing I have seen for many a day.

[1] Mr. Buchanan was returned unopposed on Feb. 26, 1903.

You ask about Brodrick's Army scheme. Certainly attack it freely. It has no friends that I know of—Military or Civilian.

1903. My own opinion (which need not embarrass any one else) is that in the War the Office itself did its work exceedingly well (*e.g.* supplies, stores, recruiting, etc.) and the failure was due to:—

(*a*) The vanity and self-sufficiency of —— and ——; their jealousy of others and each other, and their failure to appreciate the job on hand.

(*b*) The incompetence of some of the Generals in the Office (what can you expect? 'Bête comme un vieux militaire' is a proverb.)

(*c*) The fact, which could not have been got over, that the whole thing was on a scale exceeding anything that the organisation ever contemplated.

This last is the main point.

But his proposed Army Corps are preposterous, and there is no sign of a real grasp of what our future needs will be. The truth is we cannot provide for a fighting Empire, and nothing will give us the power. A peaceful Empire of the old type we are quite fit for. But they should be called upon to table their estimates of the *wants*: and then we can begin to see how we can supply them.

Mr. Chamberlain was still in South Africa when Parliament reassembled on February 17, and there were no signs of the storm which was to break on his return. The debate on the King's Speech was dull and rambling, but Campbell-Bannerman enlivened it with good-natured banter of the Government over their Venezuelan exploit, and one serious passage about Education. The differences between Government and Opposition were, he declared, 'not idle disputes on random points, but episodes in the perennial battle for democratic Government and spiritual freedom.' The London School Board, about to perish, if rumour was well founded, was 'one of the first, the most easily working, most successful, and most effective machines ever created by the popular voice.' Mr. Brodrick's Army Corps schemes, which he regarded as a dangerous sham, offered him frequent opportunities, which he seldom or never missed, of preaching what he believed to be sound military doctrine. All

this was, politically speaking, marking time; but the Liberal Party was in good spirits, and much elated by its continued success at by-elections. He addressed a great meeting at Leeds on March 19, and once more took the opportunity of nailing the Irish flag to the mast. The new Land scheme would, he insisted, make Home Rule not less but more necessary. 'Not the most Unionist of Unionist Governments and parties will be able to resist the necessity of setting up some great national authority which shall stand between the payer and the receiver, and which shall at once guarantee and enforce the punctual payments of the instalments due. And if that is so, away go all the angry arguments, all the shrill recriminations; they melt like the baseless fabric of a dream; and the old policy, the Liberal policy of 1886 and 1893, will, in the words of its great author, "hold the field."'

In another passage which, in view of after events, is worth putting on record, he appealed for friendly relations with both France and Germany. In 1903 our relations with France were supposed to be scarcely, if at all, less difficult than our relations with Germany, and Campbell-Bannerman desired peace with both.

Now look at Germany. Why should we not be cordial friends with our Teutonic brethren on the Continent, when we have so much of their blood, or, if you like it better, they have so much of ours. Our commercial rivalry no doubt is keen, but it need not make us anything but friends. I have taken more than one occasion lately in public to enter a protest against the culpable bandying of angry recriminations with which the press in both countries has tried, but happily in vain, to arouse a factitious hostility between them. Now, come to France, the old hereditary enemy! Your hereditary enemy it may be, but not mine. I am too true a son of Caledonia to have anything but gratitude and affection for the ancient ally of my country. In the old days there was this hereditary enmity between France and Great Britain, but now the traditional enmity is nothing but a tradition. With the France of to-day we have no quarrel whatever. We in this land of settled and inherited liberty recognise the French people as being on the Continent the foremost champions, after

CHAP. XXIII. 1903. much toil and storm, of enlightened freedom; and the large and happily ever-growing intercourse, commercial and social, between the two neighbouring and neighbourly peoples brings us closer every day. . . . We have all observed with the utmost satisfaction the declarations recently made in France by public men of various parties in favour of relations with this country of goodwill and cordial co-operation.

From this he passed by a natural transition to the question of armaments:—

If all this is true, if this is our attitude towards the Great European Powers, how miserable does this ruinous condition of armed peace appear—an armed peace which is almost more disastrous than wars! . . . Overtures, we are told, have been made and rejected. What are we to do then? I say make them again and again and again. There is nothing dishonourable in making them, there is nothing cowardly, there is nothing of which we can in the least degree be ashamed. Let us make them again and again until we succeed.—(Leeds, March 19.)

He was never an anti-German, but for France he had always a very warm affection. A few months later, when a party of French Deputies and Senators visited the House of Commons (July 21), he expressed his feelings in a speech which all who heard it declared to be a model of fluent and eloquent French. Both Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain were present on this occasion, and he delighted the French guests by explaining to them that the one was the *enfant gâté* and the other the *enfant terrible* of the Unionist Party—a characterisation which drew a friendly remonstrance from Mr. Chamberlain.

The principal measures of the session were the London Education Bill and Mr. Wyndham's Land Purchase Bill. The first applied to London everything that Liberals and Nonconformists had found detestable in the previous measure; it abolished the School Board, gave full maintenance to the Voluntary Schools, retained religious tests for their teachers. But it was further aggravated in Liberal eyes by the plain evidence which it bore of the dislike which

Unionist Governments of this period entertained for the London County Council, then a Progressive and Radical body. Instead of following the provincial model which would have made the Council the undisputed Education Authority for London, the Government sought to dilute its powers by a large infusion of Borough Councillors on the Education Committee, and gave to the Borough Councils the entire management of the Provided Schools in their areas, including the appointment of teachers and selection of sites for new schools. The animus of these proposals was so manifest and their effect upon London education would have been so disastrous, that a large number of the Government's own supporters rose in rebellion against them, and intimated that they only voted for the second reading on the understanding that the Bill would be amended in Committee. Amended it had to be, and, after a largely attended demonstration in Hyde Park, Mr. Balfour withdrew some of its more obnoxious features. Campbell-Bannerman—always to the fore on London questions—was unflagging in his opposition to this measure, and took an active personal part in organising the fight which was maintained unceasingly through the Committee stage. As on the previous Education Bill, the Opposition was much hampered by the continuous support which the Irish Party gave to the Government on these issues, and Ministers were more than once saved from defeat by these auxiliaries. Campbell-Bannerman himself bore the Irish no grudge for following the Catholic and ecclesiastical lead in this matter, but, political human nature being what it was (and is), their defection certainly increased his difficulty in keeping Home Rule in the forefront—as he always desired—of Liberal policy.

Mr. Wyndham's Irish Land Purchase Bill was an important step in the Government policy of 'killing Home Rule by kindness.' Under this Bill strong inducements were offered to tenants to buy and landlords to sell. Through 'the magic of state credit,' the tenant got a rent, say, of £100 reduced to £80, and the prospect of acquiring the

CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

fee-simple (subject to a permanent rent charge of £10 per annum to the State) at the end of sixty-eight years. The landlord, on the other hand, was to get £2895 for every £100 of rental, this sum including a share of bonus from the State of £12,000,000 to be found by the British taxpayer. The Act was to be gradual in its operation, and its cost was estimated at £100,000,000 spread over fifteen years, and to be redeemed in sixty-eight years. There were Radicals who desired to oppose this measure on the ground that it was unduly favourable to the landlords and unduly onerous to the British taxpayer, but the Opposition front bench were generally favourable, and Campbell-Bannerman gave the Bill a cautious approval, taking care to emphasise his entire disbelief in the idea that this 'kindness' would kill Home Rule.

II

Mr. Chamberlain returned from South Africa on March 14, and gave a sanguine account of his journey both at a luncheon given to him at the Guildhall and subsequently in the House of Commons. His success, however, was not unqualified. He had been baffled by the Rand magnates in his attempt to extract the thirty millions which he had led the public to believe would be their contribution to the cost of the war; and the Labour difficulties which were presently to lead the Government into the Chinese bog were already in sight. South Africa, it was evident, could no longer be reckoned among the political assets of the Government, and might before long be a heavy liability. But no one imagined that Mr. Chamberlain would sit down quietly to the swing of the pendulum and watch the Prime Minister mark time until overtaken by the inevitable catastrophe foretold in the by-elections. Echoing the words which Homer puts into the mouth of Agamemnon, his friends said that presumptuous opponents would know the difference when he was back. Had he not saved Mr. Gladstone's Government, otherwise utterly doomed, by his unauthorised programme in 1885, and might he not now

save the Unionist Party by another diversion equally effective and equally upsetting to the Opposition?

Campbell-Bannerman had all the winter been very much alive to this possibility, and more than once he warns a correspondent that no settled plans can be made 'until Joe is back.' There was, as he knew, only one diversion possible which could have the slightest chance of rallying the Tory Party as the unauthorised programme had rallied the Radicals, and that was a bold reversion to Protection. Early in the day he predicted that 'Joe would go the whole hog,' and exhorted Free Traders to be ready. No special perspicacity was required for this forecast. From the time when he became Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain had let it be known that he cherished the dream of an Imperial Zollverein. He believed it to be the chief part of his business as a Minister to find new markets and keep old ones for the British trader. This purpose, as he conceived it, was capable of being achieved in two ways: by a firm and enterprising Colonial policy such as brought him into collision with the Boers, and by tariff bargains with the Dominions which would finally lead to federation on a commercial basis. It soon became clear, however, that a Zollverein in the strict sense of the word was outside practical politics. The Dominions were not prepared to abandon their protective systems for the sake of Free Trade within the Empire. But the concession in 1897 by the Canadian Government of an abatement on its tariff to British traders opened up a new line of approach to the same object. A great Dominion had been induced to take the first step in a return to the old policy of Preference, and from that moment it became humanly certain that Mr. Chamberlain would seize the first opportunity to make a reciprocal arrangement. And since no arrangement was possible which did not involve a return to Protection against the foreigner, it was clear to most observers from 1897 onwards that Free Trade lay under a threat.

Then came the Boer war, which for the time being switched Mr. Chamberlain's activities into the alternative channel.

CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

But here again it was probable that the two things would work together. On the one hand, the expenditure incurred in the war set the Government searching for new forms of revenue; on the other, Colonial assistance loyally rendered in South Africa predisposed the public to look favourably on any fiscal specific which seemed like a gift to the Dominions. It was, therefore, with a sense of fatality that Free Traders saw Sir Michael Hicks Beach hand Mr. Chamberlain the key to their fortress in the Corn Tax of his 1902 Budget, and observed the immediate sequel in Sir Wilfrid Laurier's expression of hope that it would be the basis of a new commercial arrangement with the Dominions. A master key is commonly a very little thing which will go comfortably into the waistcoat pocket, and it was possible to argue that a shilling duty on corn 'strictly for revenue' was a convenient and profitable tax which no one would feel and only the most pedantic of Cobdenites resist. But it immediately brought the country into the rapids on Free Trade, and plunged the Cabinet into the controversy which was finally to ruin Mr. Balfour's Administration.

During 1902 the battle raged behind the scenes, with such indications of it in public as I have noticed in a previous chapter. In that year Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who seems to have had singularly little prevision of what was to follow when he proposed his Corn Tax, stood firm against its remission to Canada and had his way. Then he retired and Mr. Ritchie succeeded to his place. The question slumbered during the autumn and winter, but, as the Free Traders foresaw, it provided Mr. Chamberlain with exactly the opportunity that he wanted for a new departure, and on his return from South Africa he instantly renewed the struggle. He demanded, as Mr. Ritchie subsequently told the public,[1] 'that the shilling tax should be kept on and that preference should be given to the Colonies.' Mr. Ritchie, in his own words, 'was determinedly opposed to this proposal.' He knew that it was only the commence-

[1] Speech at Croydon, Oct. 9, 1903.

ment of a much larger scheme. 'You could not stop at the shilling, and you could not stop at Canada.' So he told the Prime Minister without hesitation that, if the Cabinet 'adopted this policy, he would leave the Government.' He won his case for the time being, and the master key passed back into the possession of the Free Traders. The Cabinet finally decided upon the withdrawal of the Corn Tax, which appears to have been acquiesced in by the Colonial Secretary, as a shade better, from his point of view, than its retention and the refusal of Preference.

III

No one who knew Mr. Chamberlain could suppose for a moment that he would accept defeat after one encounter with Mr. Ritchie. His retort came swiftly in a speech at Birmingham on May 15, in which he declared food taxes and preference and the power of retaliating against foreigners who penalised the Colonies to be essential for the consolidation of the Empire, and intimated that he intended this to be the issue at the next election. In the meantime, he deplored that as a member of the Government he had been compelled in deference to 'the established fiscal system of the country' to decline an offer from Canada which, as Secretary of State for the Colonies, he thought fair and handsome. On the very same day, the Prime Minister, speaking to a deputation of Unionists, had defended the repeal of the Corn Tax on the ground that in the present state of opinion it could not be a permanent part of our fiscal system, and had described it as 'a tax which revives old controversies, which is attached to no new policy believed of the people at large, and which, being thus the battledore and shuttlecock of the two contending parties, is singularly ill-fitted to be of that permanent armoury which every Chancellor of the Exchequer, be his politics whatever they may be, must have at his command to carry out the high functions entrusted to him.' The public, which did not observe the saving clauses adroitly introduced between the lines of this deliverance, read the two speeches

CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

side by side in the following days' papers with something like stupefaction. Not for years had there been such a political sensation. Party men asked distractedly what could be going on behind the scenes that these fragments of unrehearsed drama should be thrown at the public on the same day by the two principal actors in the Unionist cast. Did either of these eminent men know that the other was going to speak, had they consulted each other beforehand, were they defying each other or playing into each other's hands? The newspapers had a dozen different stories; the Lobby was a tumult of rumour and gossip. But Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain were not the only speakers on May 15. Campbell-Bannerman also was on the platform that evening at the annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation—this year held at Scarborough—and he addressed himself to the Corn Tax in a passage which could scarcely have been more pointed if he had had before him the actual text of what Mr. Chamberlain was saying at Birmingham:—

This tax is not merely a bread tax, or a subvention to the farmer or the miller; it is a signal held out to the whole Empire to send in its claims for preferential treatment. . . . There is admission of the fact that the tax was imposed in order that it might be taken off in the case of Colonial imports. Canada would expect, no doubt, a tax upon corn, Australia upon wool, New Zealand—I should think we should leave it to Mr. Seddon, but probably it would be mutton. If the self-governing Colonies are all to have their claims so listened to, India and the Crown Colonies would surely also have to be put on a preferential footing, and we should have a Chinese wall built round the Empire from the battlements of which we should shout defiance to the world at large. Is this a new doctrine? Is this to be a twentieth-century doctrine? Why, it is as old as the hills. It is the mediæval feudal ideal; it is that old ideal of your border towers and castles on the Rhine, and of each little town having its circumvallation of walls, and at the gate an octroi duty demanded on all that passes in. . . . Our relations with our Colonies are excellent. We are tied to them by the closest bonds of friendship and regard and esteem and common blood and common sentiment. In what respect would this great and memorable

and unexampled commonwealth of free nations—because that is what our Empire is—be strengthened by leaguing itself against the other nations of the world. The whole spirit of such a policy is false. Its object is unattainable, and I venture to say that if ever it was brought to practical realisation it would contain in itself the inevitable seeds of dismemberment. No, the security and prosperity of the Empire are to be attained not by great military expenditure, not by treating our neighbours with jealousy and defiance, not by interfering with the natural processes and courses of trade, but by opening the channels of industry, by multiplying the means of communication, by promoting the exchange of commodities, and by giving new life and new inspiration to the intelligent energy of our people. Let us be thankful, then, alike on domestic and Imperial grounds, that this tax—whose alternate use and purpose have been so candidly manifested to us—is to be summarily abandoned.

That the Liberal leader on this occasion spoke for the whole Liberal Party—left wing, right wing, and centre—quickly became evident. Before the end of the month both Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey spoke uncompromisingly in the same sense, and there could be no doubt at all that the Liberal Party would fight to the death on this issue. 'This reckless criminal escapade of Joe's is the great event of our time,' Campbell-Bannerman wrote to his chairman on the last day of May. 'It is playing old Harry with all party relations. Hicks Beach will take the lead in denouncing it: he is violently (not to say viciously and even vindictively) opposed to anything in the way of protection, especially from that quarter. Young Churchill too and all that lot are furious. All the old war-horses about me—Ripon and Harcourt, for instance, are snorting with excitement. We are in for a great time.'

Having made his own position clear, Campbell-Bannerman was in favour of going slowly and letting the situation ripen before the Opposition took action in Parliament. Herein his front bench colleagues agreed with him, but other more eager spirits were for instant action and did not conceal their vexation when the House met the next day and there was no sign from the Opposition front bench.

CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

Now, they urged, was the time to force a declaration from the Government and drive a wedge between the Free Traders and Protectionists in the Unionist Party. Campbell-Bannerman had the ill-luck to be laid up with a feverish cold caught in 'that furnace of affliction,' as he calls the Scarborough meeting, and, when he recovered, his wife had a sharp return of her old illness. No summons from without could draw him from her bedside, and on May 25 he wrote to the Chief Whip :—

I am distressed to be *hors de combat* at such a time. But even if my cold was not still serious (altered in character) I would not leave this house owing to the condition of my poor wife, who is very ill. She improves a little, and we hope time and care will restore her, but for the present she is helpless, and though she has two nurses and is well attended to, I *cannot* leave her.

Characteristically, he was thinking most of the immediate parliamentary business, the London Education Bill, and goes on to enjoin 'fighting it high' in his absence. But Parliament was already drowned in the fiscal question, and his colleagues reported a serious danger that the back benches would break away, and do something foolish and impetuous, if he did not return. On the 28th, Mr. Asquith, who also reports himself 'completely *hors de combat*, being for the time without audible voice,' sent an urgent message to Grosvenor Place, begging him to come to the House 'if only for an hour this afternoon,' and to use his influence with Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Lloyd George, who threaten to 'precipitate the Tariff discussion on the motion for adjournment, thus doing their best to spoil the game.' Mr. Asquith had heard that 'A. J. B. was going to intervene, and in effect to chuck Joe and his schemes, though of course in gentle minimising fashion,' and he thought it would be well 'to have some one there who could, if necessary, say a few authoritative words.'

Campbell-Bannerman was not there and did not say the authoritative words. 'Let the two interrupters and interveners have their say,' was his reply, 'and if we do not follow it up, there will be the less gratification of vanity.'

Undeterred by these official frowns, Sir Charles Dilke made his speech on the motion for the adjournment of the House over the Whitsuntide recess, and put the straight question whether the Colonial Secretary's views were endorsed by his colleagues. The replies were the beginning of the long game of fence and evasion which was to be played out in the next two and a half years. Mr. Asquith's anticipation that 'A. J. B. was going to chuck Joe and his schemes' was certainly not realised. Were we, asked Mr. Balfour, to be left utterly helpless in all Tariff negotiations? Was it not worth considering whether by some arrangement with the Colonies we could secure an open market there for British manufactures, notwithstanding the prejudices on both sides which would have to be overcome? There was no contradiction between Mr. Chamberlain's views and his own. He was not prepared to say that Mr. Chamberlain's views were practicable, but he was sure that if the British Empire was to consist for ever of a number of isolated units, it would be impossible for us to make great economic progress. Pressed by Mr. Lloyd George, he said there would be no change in the fiscal policy of the Government before a dissolution. This electioneering hint was developed by Mr. Chamberlain, who admitted at once that a new mandate would have to be given to the Government by the country before his suggestions could be carried out. How the electors were to be approached he outlined in a few emphatic sentences. The country was to be told that, if it refused the required fiscal change, a united Empire would be an impossibility. The working man was to be assured that though the price of his food might be raised, the extra cost would be covered by extra wages and also compensated for by social reforms, such as old age pensions, which would be rendered possible by the new sources of revenue. The manufacturer was to be persuaded that the new fiscal weapon would enable us in times of depression to defend our own trade against the unjust competition of the gigantic trusts formed in America and Germany. Already the vision broadened out, and the speaker had

seemingly convinced himself that the small change in the fiscal system required to cement the Empire would by some providential means bring a shower of blessings upon all classes of the community. He too declared that there was no difference between himself and the Prime Minister; and if the two men were thus agreed, it seemed an irresistible inference that the Unionist Party would presently go to the country with the policy thus outlined for their fighting flag.[1]

IV

If their intention was to force the game, the interveners had certainly succeeded in their object. The speeches of the two leaders made confusion in the Unionist Party, and before the debate was over Lord Hugh Cecil and Mr. Winston Churchill had declared their vehement dissent. Within the next week it became clear that the Unionist Party was threatened with a most formidable schism. Mr. Chamberlain had judged rightly that the great majority of average Tories, always Protectionists at heart, would leap to his lead, but he could scarcely have reckoned on the amount and quality of the dissent that he provoked. Within the next week it was reported that there were at least fifty stalwarts in the House of Commons who could be relied upon in all circumstances to resist the new policy, and fifty more who were greatly disturbed. The Government majority was large, but not large enough to stand a possible secession on this scale; and with an adverse tide already running in the country, any uncertainty or confusion in the rank and file was likely to bring total disaster. Inquiry into the situation during the short Whitsuntide recess brought so lively an apprehension of the danger to Whips and party managers as to make them decide that at all costs time must be gained for the party to find its bearings. The staunch Free Traders were clear what they must do, if certain things happened, but for the time being they joined with the doubters in ardently desiring that these

[1] House of Commons, May 28.

things should not happen, and all but extreme zealots in the Protectionist camp agreed with them. Give time, said the Free Traders, and this madness will pass; give time, said the Protectionists, and the dissentients, bar a few incorrigibles, will find salvation. They will discover, said a cynic, 'on which side of the fence their bread is buttered.' The decision, therefore, was for time.

Campbell-Bannerman had foreseen this when he warned the interveners against precipitancy; but he too had his reasons for going slow. He doubted the sanguine reports brought to him about the number of the stalwarts on the Unionist side, and he was of opinion that they would be chilled rather than attracted by a too ardent embrace at this stage. The wooing, in his view, had to be conducted discreetly if it was to have any chance of success. But he saw at once, after the debate of May 28, that a passive policy was impossible for the Opposition leaders, and he prepared himself for the fray. On June 5, at Perth, he delivered a slashing attack on the 'cuttle-fish policy' of the Government, and heroically declared that 'to dispute Free Trade, after fifty years' experience of it, was like disputing the law of gravitation.' Four days later (June 9), when Parliament reassembled after the Whitsuntide recess, the issue was forced by that impenitent veteran of the Protectionist cause, Mr. Chaplin, who moved an amendment to the Finance Bill to relieve tea rather than corn from taxation. The subject of the debate which followed was not, however, the relative claims of tea and corn for relief from taxation, but the singular and perilous position of the Unionist Party. Sir Michael Hicks Beach [1] said bluntly that Mr. Chamberlain's proposals had divided, and, if persisted in, would destroy the Unionist Party. Mr. Ritchie, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, declared himself a convinced Free Trader, and intimated that if he consented to

[1] 'You are aware that Hicks Beach is going to lead the assault upon J. C.—he is violently (if not vindictively ?) anxious to do so, and it is he who captains the young Tory anti-protectionists.'—Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon, May 31, '03.

Mr. Chamberlain's schemes being inquired into, as Mr. Balfour now proposed, it was only in the belief that inquiry would prove them to be impracticable. The Duke of Devonshire, meanwhile, had said substantially the same thing in the debate which was proceeding simultaneously in the House of Lords. Mr. Arthur Elliot, the newly appointed Secretary to the Treasury, made it clear that this also was his attitude.

The division in the Cabinet was thus openly revealed, and it remained for the Prime Minister to show how on any principle of collective responsibility Ministers could continue in the same Cabinet who held diametrically opposite views about the policy which, according to both the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary, was to be presented to the country by the Government at the next election. Mr. Balfour's position was one of great and unconcealed embarrassment, and that he would somehow temporise was generally taken for granted. But neither Campbell-Bannerman nor any of his colleagues were prepared for the novel and daring method which he adopted. This was to declare himself a man of open mind and unsettled convictions, waiting on an inquiry to be conducted by the Government into the whole of the new issues raised by his formidable colleague. Not only did he not apologise for this attitude, but he boldly declared it to be the only honest and honourable course for a Minister in his position. 'I should consider,' he said, 'that I was ill performing my duty, I will not say to my party, but to the House and to the country, if I were to profess a settled conviction where no settled conviction exists.' And then, adroitly proceeding to defend himself against a supposed attack from the Protectionist members of his party, he presented himself as deeply reluctant to interfere with a venerable system without the most careful examination of every side of the problem. For the moment it was forgotten that no one but he and the Colonial Secretary had proposed to interfere with this system, and, when he sat down, a considerable number of Unionist Free Traders were almost persuaded that they had done him a serious

injustice. The theory was now advanced that he was a Free Trader at heart, but was compelled to play a patient and skilful game to prevent Mr. Chamberlain from capturing and destroying the Unionist Party.

It was said at the time that no one but Mr. Balfour could have made such a speech in such an emergency without immediate catastrophe. That a Prime Minister could be without settled convictions upon one of the fundamentals of British policy, and that he could propose to carry on as if nothing had happened when it had been publicly challenged by the most important of his colleagues, would have seemed fantastic if the Prime Minister had been Palmerston or Russell or Gladstone. But Mr. Balfour had a reputation as a philosophic doubter which here stood him in good stead. It seemed actually probable that this was his state of mind, and members of his party who were in the same political difficulty could, without total absurdity, present him and themselves as braving the scoffs of the shallow-minded in a disinterested quest after truth. He covered their doubts, which were mainly about the safety of their seats, with a mantle of scientific research. Campbell-Bannerman was much blamed in after months because he was not at once able to find the counter-stroke to this mystification; and, truth to tell, he had not either the subtlety or the readiness in debate which were needed to deal with so quick-footed an opponent as Mr. Balfour. In reply (June 10), he made the common-sense answer that Mr. Chamberlain's pronouncement had taken the fiscal question out of the region of pious opinion, on which a Prime Minister might have no settled conviction, into the region of practical politics in which he was bound to have such a conviction. It was true, but the kind of truth which there was no means of driving home. No sharp issue was possible in the division lobby, for on Mr. Chaplin's amendment (proposing to relieve tea instead of sugar), which provided the peg for this debate, the Opposition were bound to support the Government; and Mr. Balfour had given notice that he would afford no further facilities for discussion except


CHAP. XXIII. 1903.

on a direct vote of censure, which would have rallied most if not all the doubters of the Government. Campbell-Bannerman was altogether opposed to giving the Government this opportunity, his reason being that it would have displayed the nakedness of the parliamentary land and given an entirely false impression to the public of the relative strength of the Protectionist and Free Trade causes. From that position he refused to budge in spite of much pressure from the stalwarts, who held that full-dress parliamentary debates would do far more to educate the public than would be counteracted by the proof which the division lobby might offer of the notorious fact that the Opposition was weak in Parliament.

Whether Campbell-Bannerman was right or wrong in this, it was clear after the debate of June 9 that Mr. Balfour had won his point, and gained time. It was understood that Mr. Chamberlain was to make no more propagandist speeches in the country pending the 'inquiry,' and that the Free Trade members of the Government had definitely decided to fight their battle from within the Cabinet for the time being. There were to be no resignations, and, if no resignations, then no secessions among the rank and file. The big offensive being thus postponed by mutual consent, there remained nothing for the Opposition but trench raids to unmask the enemy's position and compel him to occupy ground favourable to themselves. These were easier in the House of Lords, where custom permits anything to be said on any pretext, than in the Commons, where the Speaker rigidly interpreted the rules of the House against fiscal free-lancing; and the Liberal peers improved the occasion with the powerful aid of Lord Goschen in more than one full-dress debate. Their special and quite legitimate object was to render the Duke of Devonshire, who was a staunch Free Trader and a very honest man, as uncomfortable as possible in the very ambiguous circumstances in which he now found himself. In this they very largely succeeded, for the Duke was incapable of concealing his feelings and scarcely took the trouble to avoid the traps which were laid for him.

But the Commons were not idle, and on June 17 Campbell-Bannerman found a further opportunity of exploring the question in a message published by the Colonial Office, in which the Government of New South Wales 'expressed great satisfaction at the declaration by the British Government that every self-governing colony shall be secured in the free exercise of its right to enter into closer trade relations with the Mother Country.' When asked what was the declaration referred to, Mr. Balfour replied that he did not know, whereupon I myself drew a bow at a venture and sent a reply-paid cablegram to the Premier of New South Wales, asking him to specify the declaration. This brought the desired and expected answer that the declaration referred to was in the speeches of Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour. I sent a copy of this cable to Campbell-Bannerman, who moved the adjournment of the House to call attention to it. The point was that in spite of the Prime Minister's assurances that the Government was unpledged by either Mr. Chamberlain's speeches or his own, the Dominions had in fact interpreted them as declarations binding the Government, thus showing the impossibility of maintaining the line between pious opinions and practical politics upon which Mr. Balfour was relying to keep his party together. The debate which followed was scarcely a successful one. The Speaker kept it within the narrowest lines, and threw Campbell-Bannerman off his stroke by calling him to order whenever he seemed to be touching on the merits of any part of the fiscal problem. A large part of the short time available for a motion for adjournment was occupied by Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, the latter improving the occasion to paint a highly coloured picture of the plight of the Colonies left at the mercy of the foreigner, and of the 'humiliating position' of the Home Government if it were left without means to defend them. The division was a bad one for the Opposition (252 to 132), and most of the Unionist Free Traders either voted with the Government or abstained. Nevertheless this debate marked an important stage in the controversy, for

in the course of it Mr. Balfour pinned himself to 'Retaliation,' and Mr. Chamberlain boldly claimed, in the presence of his Cabinet colleagues, that both he and Mr. Balfour were 'speaking for the Government as a whole.'

V

In the meantime, the scope of the Birmingham policy was being extended. At the beginning of June Mr. Chamberlain wrote the famous letter to a working man in which he declared that, if the price of food were raised, 'the rate of wages would certainly be raised in greater proportion,' and spoke of 'bargaining on equal terms,' *i.e.* imposing tariff for tariff as likely to be beneficial to the whole range of British industry. The working man was asked to believe that 'the increase of exports, wages, and general prosperity' during the previous twenty years had been greater in the United States and Germany than in the United Kingdom, which was 'the only civilised country in the world to enjoy the blessings of unrestricted free imports.' Mr. Chamberlain also assured his correspondent that he 'would not look at' old age pensions unless he felt able to promise that a 'large scheme' would be assured by 'a revision of our system of import duties.' A few days later a correspondence between him and Mr. Vince (a friendly Birmingham Liberal Unionist official) elicited the fact that he was prepared to protect electrical machinery against 'illegitimate German competition,' and that he considered competition by sweated wages to answer to that definition. Evidently Mr. Chamberlain was travelling fast and far, and what now threatened was not merely a small tax on food for the purpose of giving Colonial Preference, but a full-blooded system of protection extending to all industry. Nothing, as Mr. Chamberlain discovered, was easier than to rekindle the smouldering embers of this ancient policy in the Tory Party; and a Prime Minister of unsettled convictions was the last man to prevent the conflagration spreading. Only the staunchest conviction in the head of the Government could have

prevailed against Mr. Chamberlain's impetuosity at this moment.

There was nevertheless enough resistance among Unionists in Parliament, and more than enough in the country, to make confusion in the Unionist Party. Within twelve months the parliamentary situation had been dramatically reversed, and a united Opposition now faced a perplexed and divided Government. Yet the Opposition leaders were still in a position of great difficulty. To their followers the situation seemed outrageous. The most formidable member of the Government had, with the connivance of the Prime Minister, announced that he intended to make a fundamental change in the fiscal system the dominant issue at the next election. Here was no theoretical issue, but an instant challenge on which, according to all the rules of political warfare, the Government should stand or fall, and honest men make an immediate choice. Yet, though it was notorious that a powerful section of Ministers profoundly dissented from their colleagues, the Government apparently was to go on as if nothing had happened, and to keep the ring while the battle was fought out. With favourable conditions thus assured to him, Mr. Chamberlain was to prepare a massed attack on the Free Trade citadel, while Mr. Balfour skilfully sapped the foundations and kept the defenders at arms' length by imposing silence on the House of Commons. The Liberal rank and file said vociferously that such a state of things was intolerable, and demanded prompt action from their leaders.

Campbell-Bannerman remained calm. When eager spirits declared that the Government must break up 'next week,' and that only a push was needed to bring it down, he pointed to the uncomfortable fact that its majority was still over a hundred (and a good deal more if the Irish were not to be counted on), and that there was no discoverable way of inducing the Free Trade Unionists to vote against it. During these weeks he was in close touch with Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who begged him to go slow and urged strongly that it would be a calamity from the Free Trade point of

CHAP. XXIII. 1903. view if the Unionist Party were definitely committed to Protection, as it would be if its Free Trade members came out of it. To Campbell-Bannerman the decisive fact was that at this stage they plainly would not come out of it, and that any move that was open to the Opposition would drive them back into the arms of the Government. 'An amendment to the Budget,' he wrote to Mr. Bryce, 'is to be avoided; we are supporters of the Budget, and a division (necessarily a defeat) would hurt our cause throughout the world. Also we must join hands as much as possible with Michael and his angels. As to a definite and separate resolution, of that we can judge when we see how the land lies as disclosed by the debate on the Finance Bill. We ought not to court defeat and we ought not to affront the Free Trade Unionists.' A few days later (June 17) he wrote to his Stirling chairman, Mr. J. Smith:—

We are repressing the ardour of our people in the House, some of whom have clamoured for a direct challenge. Even a declaratory motion in favour of Free Trade would be met by the Government by an amendment in favour of a periodical review of and inquiry into our fiscal system—for which all the Unionist Free Traders would vote. We should be in a woeful minority, Joe would triumph, and Free Trade would be set back. Speeches on the clauses of the Finance Bill will, of course, be useful, but nothing to provoke a division: and we are going to organise meetings in the country on a wide scale.

The Sugar Convention Bill, that 'working-model of Tariff Reform,' as Mr. Winston Churchill called it, gave the Opposition one opportunity of affirming their faith before Parliament rose, and they were quick to point out that in its fostering of the minor interest of sugar refiners against the major interest of bakers and confectioners, and its heavy mulcting of the consumer for a small benefit to a British colony, it had all the marks of the new heresy. Campbell-Bannerman wound up the second reading debate on this Bill on July 29. The Opposition was, of course, overborne, but the results of this measure helped not a little to reinforce the argument against further experiments in the same

direction. Sugar being disposed of, there remained little for the Opposition but to make Mr. Balfour's position as uncomfortable as possible. A hurricane of questions was directed to the 'inquiry,' which more and more evidently was a device for gaining time until the mind of the country could be discovered. Rumour spoke of much agitation behind the scenes. The Colonial Secretary was reported to be firing exceedingly cross questions at the Board of Trade, which steadily resisted giving him the answers he wanted. His friends alleged that the Department was manned by hide-bound Cobdenites who refused to acknowledge obvious facts, and they were particularly incensed at the new-fangled doctrine of 'invisible exports' which it set up to explain the 'adverse balance of trade' which formed so large a part of Mr. Chamberlain's case. In the House, Mr. Balfour twisted and turned in his effort to explain why the 'Grand Inquest of the Nations' should alone be excluded from taking part in these momentous investigations, and on one occasion (July 15) Campbell-Bannerman floored him completely by producing from his waistcoat pocket the exact terms of the invitation in which Mr. Chamberlain had appealed to the House to 'join eagerly in the discussion of this immensely important question.' It was a fine parliamentary score received with enthusiasm on the Opposition benches, but Mr. Balfour remained master of the situation, and the Speaker closed the last opportunity for debate by ruling the fiscal question out of order on the Appropriation Bill. In the meantime, Mr. Chamberlain, though debarred from public speaking by the terms of his compact with Mr. Balfour until the 'inquiry' was concluded, was issuing through his organisation at Birmingham a stream of leaflets and pamphlets which left no doubt that one mind at least was made up. Answers to these were speedily forthcoming from the newly founded Free Trade Union, which endeavoured to enlist all parties for a defensive campaign, and found some of its most zealous supporters among Unionist Free Traders. When Parliament was prorogued on August 13, confusion and uncertainty

CHAP. XXIII. 1903. were at their height. The 'inquiry,' said Mr. Morley, 'was a pitched battle with a most accomplished bruiser on a foregone conclusion.' There was also, however, a very accomplished fencer to be reckoned with, and many months were to elapse before his game was played out.

For once Campbell-Bannerman spent the autumn in Scotland, his wife's state of health precluding the long journey to Marienbad. 'My wife has got down here comfortably, and seems already to have gained strength from the change, the quiet, and the escape from the lifeless air of London,' he reports to a friend at the beginning of August. But she remained an invalid, and care for her health was an even greater preoccupation with him than the affairs of the Liberal Party. A few old friends—Sir Francis Mowatt, Lord Sandhurst, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, Captain Sinclair—paid short visits, and speech-making set in before the end of September. But having made up his mind to wait on events, he remained a placid spectator for the next six weeks. Masterly inactivity was entirely to his liking when he had once convinced himself that it was also good tactics. The party newspapers continued to grumble at the lethargy of the Liberal leaders and to contrast their holiday spirit with the fervent activity of the Birmingham Tariff-mongers. Campbell-Bannerman remained unruffled by the leader-writers, but a question from his Dunfermline chairman, Mr. Robertson, moved him to a defence of his position :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. William Robertson

BELMONT, *Sept.* 15, '03.—In your P.S. you raise the question of inaction in the House of Commons. The newspaper men have generally been strongly for debate at all hazards, but even of them that fire-eater Massingham at least modified his ardour when he came to see the real bearings. As to our men in the House I only know one of any prominence (Robson, K.C.) who kept on urging it.

1st.—The Protectionists and Chamberlainites in House and Press called for it and tried to goad us into it by taunts. That was quite enough to make me hesitate.

2nd.—This is to be a 'big fight,' and we shall want all the help we can get: especially the help of Unionist Free Traders. The very worst thing we could do would have been to make such a move as would necessarily drive them into the Government camp: to quench instead of fanning the spirit of rebellion among them.

People said, 'Let us have an abstract resolution which they *cannot* vote against.' Well, let us see. Suppose we had moved 'That in the opinion of this House no tax but for purely revenue purposes should be put on the food of the people.' What would have happened? Some one would have moved to leave out all after 'That' in order to insert 'our fiscal system ought to be inquired into'—every man of them would have voted for the amendment, and the back of the meeting would have been broken at the very outset.

3rd.—But they say, 'Never mind the division, these men would have been forced to declare themselves.' Would they? They would have held their tongues, all but those who have already spoken out. And the miserable division would have been hailed and quoted as a pronouncement by the House of Commons in favour of the idea of taxing food for preferential purposes, and would have been so read in the Colonies and throughout the world: and the cause of Free Trade would have received a set-back from which recovery would have been difficult. Talk of a campaign! Who would begin a campaign by a deliberate false move, by losing a battle on purpose?

Therefore I refused to be beguiled into any debate which would give rise to a division. *We* should all of us of course have understood the division; but the man in the street would not; the colonists would not; and Joe would have rubbed in the lesson that this was to him the earnest of victory!

I do not know of any difference of opinion in this matter among *experienced* politicians—I may say from the Speaker downwards; though it was his pedantic interpretation of the Rules that caused the difficulty (I do not say he was not strictly right), he fully recognised the folly we should have committed if we had fallen into the snare of a motion.

His estimate of the situation was the perfectly correct one that nothing would happen till October, 'when Joe will go in sorrow not in anger, and will lead an independent crusade in the country.' Then wigs would be on the green, but in the meantime the quiet life at Belmont.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE 'STARVING TWELVE MILLIONS'

The Game of Skill in the Cabinet—Resignation of the Duke of Devonshire—A Comment at Blairgowrie—The Reconstructed Government—Liberal Disappointment—Campbell-Bannerman's Reflections—Mr. Chamberlain on the War-path—The Raging and Tearing Propaganda—The Free Trade Answer—Campbell-Bannerman on Free Trade—The Starving Twelve Millions—A Social Policy—This Picture and That—The War Commission Report—Civilities with Lord Rosebery—Problems and Difficulties—The Free Fooders and the Liberal Party—The Defection of Sir Michael—The Freedom of Dunfermline—A Last Word for 1903.

THE actual time-table proved to be a little in advance of Campbell-Bannerman's forecast. The Cabinet met to consider its fiscal policy on September 14, and continued its sitting over the following day. Within the next few days Mr. Balfour published the pamphlet entitled 'Insular Free Trade,' in which he notified his conversion to Retaliation, and the Fiscal Blue Book compiled by the Board of Trade, containing the statistics gathered in the course of the 'Inquiry,' also made its appearance (Sept. 10).

On the 18th it was announced that Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Ritchie, and Lord George Hamilton had resigned, and three days later that Lord Balfour of Burleigh and Mr. Arthur Elliot had followed their example. But, to the bewilderment of Liberals and Free Traders, the Duke of Devonshire remained in the Cabinet and was apparently to be a party to the strategy revealed in the correspondence between Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain. That was in effect a division of parts whereby the Prime Minister committed the Unionist Party to Retaliation, while Mr.

Chamberlain quitted office and set out to convert the country to food taxes, the assumption on both sides being that while the country was ripe for the first of these things, it had yet to be converted to the second. In the meantime the appointment of Mr. Chamberlain's son to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Cabinet gave his father a substantial guarantee that the sympathy which Mr. Balfour had expressed for 'the closer fiscal union between the Mother Country and the Colonies' would be something more than Platonic.

Free Traders saw with astonishment the apparent consent of the Duke of Devonshire to these transactions. 'How the "Dook" can stay as a man of honour' (comments Campbell-Bannerman in a letter to his chairman, Mr. Robertson) 'none of us can see. This fine idea of Joe freely operating outside, Arthur sympathising with him and co-operating inside, and Mr. Austen holding the keys of the safe, presents worse dangers than ever to Free Trade.' To Mr. Herbert Gladstone he wrote (Sept. 21):—

> The Government can hardly shamble on as they are—and the dishonesty of their position will become more and more apparent and will kill them. This whole plan of Joe outside and Arthur inside working in co-operation, with 'our Mr. Austen' in charge of the counting-house, is too barefaced for anything. And the 'Dook'! What a contemptible figure he cuts!

Surprise increased when it became known that the fact of Mr. Chamberlain's resignation had been disclosed by the Prime Minister to the Duke but withheld from his colleagues. He therefore had stayed in the Cabinet with the knowledge that Mr. Chamberlain was leaving it, and they had resigned in the belief that Mr. Chamberlain was remaining. The *Times* spoke of the 'consummate skill' with which Mr. Balfour[1] had succeeded in retaining the Duke while disburdening himself of the other Free Traders, and the phrase was long remembered. But the game was not yet played

[1] For Mr. Balfour's explanation of these transactions see his memorandum to the Cabinet.—*Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, by Bernard Holland, vol. ii. pp. 352-53.

CHAP. XXIV. 1903. out. The Duke, whose mental processes were not rapid, had apparently been mystified by the dialectics of Mr. Balfour's pamphlet and dazed by the swiftness and subtlety of the transactions that followed. A fortnight later he awoke with a crash, and insisted that his resignation should be immediately accepted. His eyes, he explained, had been opened by the speech at Sheffield in which Mr. Balfour had declared his desire to 'reverse, annul, and delete' the established fiscal system which sanctioned tariffs only for revenue purposes, and many things hitherto mysterious had become clear. Mr. Balfour retorted that there was nothing in the speech which was not in the pamphlet (to which the Duke had consented), and that in the case of any other man in the world he should have attributed his action to anxiety to pick a quarrel.

This sequence of events had yet to be completed when Campbell-Bannerman spoke at Blairgowrie on September 24, but he had the Balfour-Chamberlain correspondence before him, and he took off the gloves about it :—

The Prime Minister proclaims his sympathy with his colleague who has left him, hopes that the plan will ultimately be adopted, and he himself is to remain at the head of affairs and prepare the patient by minute doses of Protection for the ultimate fatal draught. The observation that at once occurs to me is this—How little they must think of the perspicacity of their countrymen if they expect us to be taken in by a measure so obvious, so discreditable, and let me say, so dishonest. You and I have often been opposed to a Government from whose views of public policy we differed; but it was an honest Government, though, as we thought, mistaken; and we felt respect for it. There have been incidents in the history of this Administration—the Khaki election, for instance—which strained that feeling; but we managed to maintain it. What respect can we have now—can any one have—for a Government the head of which avows his acceptance of a certain ideal, admits that the country is opposed to it, allows a colleague to resign on this express ground, and yet remains in office for the purpose of insidiously paving the way for its acceptance.

But whatever criticism Mr. Balfour had invited, he had

succeeded by the middle of October in reconstructing his Government, and he now had three or four months before him in which to consolidate his position before Parliament met. Herein he profited not a little from the Duke of Devonshire's hesitation, for if the Duke had resigned at the same moment as the other Free Trade members of the Cabinet, it is doubtful if Mr. Balfour could have survived the blow or, if he did survive it, have reconstructed his Government on any terms short of complete submission to Mr. Chamberlain. In the actual circumstances he found himself by the middle of October with a Government which admirably suited his purpose of playing out time. It was certainly not a strong or distinguished Government, but in this there were compensations for the Prime Minister. None of his colleagues could reasonably be expected to challenge his authority or disturb his plans by an untimely resignation. Looking at the whole affair, the average Unionist, who dreaded nothing so much as a dissolution, concluded that the Duke's resignation was a blessing in disguise, since it had relieved Mr. Balfour of the one remaining colleague who was likely to precipitate another crisis, and left him with a Cabinet which could be absolutely relied upon to hold together as long as there was a parliamentary majority. The word went out that there was to be no dissolution, and the Conservative Chief Whip announced in a speech at Derby (Oct. 29) that the Prime Minister would not think of retiring until he had redeemed his pledges to his party, and especially his pledge to the licensed victuallers, who were at this time gravely disturbed at their legal position under the decision in the case of Sharpe *v.* Wakefield.

There was indeed no doubt that Mr. Balfour had won the first round in the fiscal game. He had avoided the break-up of his party, satisfied Mr. Chamberlain by weeding the Government of his most active opponents, and put himself in a position to carry on while Mr. Chamberlain pursued his propaganda as a free man. The two men were evidently working on parallel lines to the same conclusion, but the

difference between them was sufficiently marked to enable the one to appeal to the moderates and the other to the zealots, while between them they spread the issue to the entire fiscal system of the country. At the end of May, Mr. Chamberlain had announced that the Empire could only be saved from disruption by his policy of Colonial Preferences and food taxes. Before the end of July, Mr. Balfour had discovered that British foreign trade was in a condition which called for an immediate reversal of our fiscal system. Students of politics might have the right measure of this apparently remarkable coincidence, but among the uninitiated it produced a vague impression that something must be seriously wrong when great minds thus leapt. The ground was thus prepared for the 'raging and tearing propaganda,' covering the whole field of fiscal policy, which was now to be launched from Birmingham.

Campbell-Bannerman had predicted, and was in no way surprised by, this result, but other members of the party saw their hopes of the promised land indefinitely postponed and cried out at the clumsiness of the leadership which had permitted itself to be thus outwitted. To these he returned, as usual, a smiling face and urged the complainants to spend less time 'in speculating on the break-up of the Government and more in preparing to meet the new attack.' For himself he was not sorry that the break-up was postponed. He looked forward to the reinstatement in power of an unqualified Liberal Party, and had little liking for any of the combinations or coalitions which seemed a likely sequel if Mr. Balfour gave up at this point. The Rosebery problem was still unsolved; too little time had yet elapsed to make the ground quite certain between the different sections of the Liberal Party; the position of the Free Fooders was wholly incalculable, and not a few of them said openly or privately that they could in no circumstances give their allegiance to a C.-B. Government. It was better, in Campbell-Bannerman's judgment, to have a straight fight on the issues now raised, with the Unionist Party in power and its fate at stake on the result, than to institute

a provisional Government of Free Traders cutting across party-lines and confusing the traditional boundaries, with the whole Unionist Party set free to attack it. Strong Free Trader as he was, he was yet of opinion that, when the time came, the judgment of the country should be asked upon the whole record of the Government, and not least upon the Report of the War Commission, which had passed a scathing condemnation on its lack of foresight and failure to adjust military preparations to diplomacy in South Africa. Nothing, he held, should be done to enable the Government to evade the full responsibility for the whole of its record or to dissolve the legal entity which alone could be held responsible.

II

The immediate matter in hand, however, was to meet the attack on Free Trade. Mr. Chamberlain, now unmuzzled, started his campaign at Glasgow on October 6, and followed up rapidly with speeches at Greenock, Cupar, Newcastle, Liverpool, Cardiff, Newport, and Leeds. It at once became evident that he had travelled far since his original controversy with Mr. Ritchie over the Corn Tax. If he still held to his food taxes and Preferences, they were now only a part, and a comparatively subordinate part, of a general scheme for saving British trade from the inroads of foreign competition. He had, moreover, discovered a plan whereby the food taxes (somewhat, as he said, to his regret) [1] could be so balanced by remission of taxation on other goods that the 'sacrifice' which he had originally contemplated as

[1] I admit that sometimes I almost feel as if this were the weak point in my whole argument, I have to say to you—because I believe it to be true—that I ask you to make this change for your own good, for the good of the Empire, and that you will not be called upon for any sacrifice. I declare to you I wish I could say that you would be called upon for a sacrifice. I declare I would rather speak to you here and appeal to you as Englishmen, and ask you whether you are not willing to do what your fathers would have done, and what, in fact, they did do; whether, for some great good in which, indeed, you might have no immediate personal or squalid interest—as we are told to consider it—you may yet be willing to make a sacrifice for great Imperial results.—(Liverpool, Oct. 28, 1903.)

necessary to the great object of consolidating the Empire would no longer be required. All the rest of his policy, he asserted, would be pure gain, and the substitution of 'constructive' taxation for that which merely drained the pockets of the taxpayer. The foundation of his case was the discovery that in the thirty years between 1872 and 1902 British exports had stagnated and even declined, whereas those of foreign Protectionist countries, notably Germany and the United States, had constantly advanced. 'Agriculture, as the greatest of all trades and industries in this country, had,' he declared, 'been practically destroyed.' 'Sugar has gone, silk has gone, iron is threatened, wool is threatened; the turn of cotton will come. . . . At the present moment these industries and the working men who depend upon them are like sheep in a field. One by one, they allow themselves to be led out to slaughter, and there is no combination, no apparent prevision of what is in store for the rest of them. You are being hit in the home trade too.'[1] The remedy was an average 10 per cent. tariff on foreign manufactured goods, in some cases more, in some cases less, the details to be worked out by an expert Commission, which would consider the circumstances of each trade, and apply the remedy in a 'scientific' manner. In order to show how the thing could be done, a 'Commission' of experts was set up consisting of Mr. Chamberlain's supporters, who called upon the threatened trades to produce their case, and proceeded to deliberate (in private) about the appropriate remedy.

It was an astonishing performance, giving evidence at every turn of abounding energy and zeal. Without any support from men of the first rank, with almost every economist of repute disputing his premises and declaring his conclusions to be false, with all the wise and eminent of both parties against him, Mr. Chamberlain pursued his way undaunted, enlarging and enriching his theme with fervent appeals to imperial sentiment, and arguments ingeniously framed to capture the manufacturing interests

[1] Greenock, Oct. 7, 1903.

in detail. Lord Salisbury was supposed to have said that it only needed a man with a match to rekindle the Protectionist flame in the Tory Party, and before Christmas Mr. Chamberlain had it well ablaze. His friends were undoubtedly right in claiming that he had nine-tenths of the Unionist Party behind him, and that the dissentients were only—in numbers—a miserable minority. But the whole army of Free Traders were on his track. Wherever he went they followed, and whatever he asserted they disputed. The Fiscal Blue-Book was their Bible, and with its aid they showed that his theory of trade decay was based on the comparison of a boom year (1872) with a comparatively depressed year (1902), and was even so only made plausible by ignoring the far larger quantities of goods represented by the money values of the second year. They maintained that his whole argument was an implicit denial that imports were paid for by exports, and that in his panic about imports he had overlooked the 'invisible exports' represented by the shipping trade and the numerous other services which Great Britain performed for the foreigner. They worked out the sum by which he sought to prove that the food taxes could be neutralised by remission of other taxes, and showed that he had overlooked the increased price on the home supply which the food taxes would impose on the consumer. They pointed out that at one moment he argued that the foreigner would pay and in the next that the consumer would bear the burden; that he exempted bacon and maize because their price must not be increased, and yet asserted that bread could be taxed without its price being raised. They declared that he had altogether failed to work out the distinction between raw material and manufactured goods: that Bermondsey was encouraged to think that leather would be taxed and Leicester that it would be free; that the tin-plate industry was being led to expect free steel while Sheffield was being promised protection. Finally they arraigned the entire policy as an attack on the general interest for the benefit of the particular; as a threat to the foreign trade which was

CHAP. XXIV. the life-blood of Great Britain and the foundation of her Empire; as calculated to lower wages and increase the cost of living for the mass of people, to divide instead of uniting the Empire, and to introduce into British politics the sinister influences which were almost invariably present in protectionist countries. Especially they asked the public to beware of committing themselves to 'the slippery slope of Protection' on an assurance that 'the duties would be so small that no one would feel them.' It was an absurdity to suppose that the great results which Mr. Chamberlain predicted for the Empire and the shower of boons which he was promising to all classes could be secured by small duties.

The history of this campaign stands outside the biography of any individual, and Campbell-Bannerman did not seek to be the protagonist in it. He frequently said in after days that no one man had done so much to defeat Mr. Chamberlain as Mr. Asquith, and he was all admiration of the speeches which he delivered during these months. 'Wonderful speeches,' he writes to a friend in November, 'how can these fellows ever have gone wrong?' But his own contribution was of great importance, and it had certain characteristic 'C.-B.' qualities which immediately caught the ear of the country.

In a speech at Perth on June 5, he said that 12,000,000 of the people were 'underfed and on the verge of starvation,' citing as his authority the investigations of Mr. Charles Booth in East London and Mr. Rowntree at York. Five days later, in the debate on the Finance Bill in the House of Commons (June 10), he repeated and emphasised this statement. 'We used,' he said, 'to hear of a submerged tenth in the population. We now know of a submergeable third. The effect of taxing the food of the people would be to turn the submergeable third into the submerged third.' Not a few Free Traders gravely shook their heads over these passages. Another of C.-B.'s stupidities! How could he be so clumsy as to present the Tariff Reformers with the damaging admission that this was the state of the

country under Free Trade? Couldn't he see the use they would make of it? And sure enough, to their despair, there immediately issued from the Birmingham Tariff factory a stream of leaflets triumphantly pointing out that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had declared 12,000,000 of the people to be 'always on the verge of starvation under Free Trade.' Sir Henry was unrepentant. To say this thing and to keep saying it was, in his view, a necessary corrective to the panegyrics on Free Trade. He believed that there was a serious risk of the realities being swamped in the torrent of tributes to our prosperity which poured from Free Trade platforms. To him it seemed self-evident that poverty must be made poorer by the taxation of its food, but to pretend that it was not poverty and to cloak it up in fine words, was a dangerous make-believe which was least of all likely to impress the workers who knew the facts from their own lives. If the poor got it into their heads that Free Traders stood for merely 'letting well alone,' then they would very likely turn to Mr. Chamberlain, who at least seemed to know something about their domestic budgets and to be concerned about their wages.

The reference, then, to the 'underfed twelve millions on the verge of starvation,' was the deliberate setting-up of a guide-post to direct Free Trade propaganda into the road of social reform. No shaking of heads could make him retract, but he was willing to explain and amplify his argument, and on August 31 he addressed a letter to Mr. Joseph Sturge of Birmingham:—

The statement you quote from a Protectionist leaflet is flatly erroneous in two particulars:—

(1) I have not said that 12,000,000 of our people are 'always on the verge of starvation.' I spoke of them in my speech at Perth on June 5 as 'underfed and on the verge of hunger,' which is not quite the same thing, and

(2) I did not state this on my own 'authority,' but I referred explicitly to the systematic investigations of Mr. Booth and of Mr. Rowntree, who have proved that in the two communities of East London and York 30 per cent of the population are in that condition. If we apply that

CHAP. XXIV. 1903. proportion to our whole population, we arrive at the figure of 12,000,000.

What I contended was that to tax the food of the 12,000,000 of men and women in this condition would be a crime, even if it could be expected to bring some distant and doubtful benefit to the Colonies, whose white population, as it happens, reaches about the same number.

My belief is that if it had not been for Free Trade and for the general prosperity and cheap food which it has brought, these millions would really have been on the verge of starvation, if, indeed, they could have existed at all. Their present condition is bad enough, and it is not to be improved by departing from Free Trade, but by applying the same principles of freedom to other subjects, such as the tenure of land and the laws which govern it. This is at least one way of effecting some improvement, but nothing except new misery can be caused by playing tricks with our fiscal freedom.

Later in the year (Newport, Nov. 30) he followed Mr. Chamberlain, who had spoken in the same place, and was even more emphatic and unrepentant :—

When Mr. Chamberlain was here the other day, he devoted some caustic observations to an argument I had used against the taxation of food. My argument was a very simple and effective one, that when a large section of our population are already underfed, it would be a cruelty to make their food dearer—common sense, I should have thought it, obvious, but it brought joy to Mr. Chamberlain's heart. 'Here is a Free Trader admitting that there is poverty and want amongst us; let us gibbet him!' and all the agents and clerks and printing presses and distributors of leaflets in Birmingham were set to work. Of course they misquoted my words, and because, being appealed to by many correspondents, I pointed out the mistakes that were made in these communications, Mr. Chamberlain comes here and puts it in his kindly fashion. He says, 'Ever since he made the statement he has been trying to wriggle out of it.' That is another 'comma'—almost amounting this time to a semicolon. I have done nothing but repeat, time after time, the actual words that I originally used in my statement, and I have given, as I originally gave, the authority on which I based it. But so far from modifying it, or wishing in any degree to make an excuse for it, I have welcomed his repetition of the statement, which he has made in many of his speeches. But why does he take a tone of

triumph over the existence of intense and widespread poverty, which he admits to exist? Does Mr. Chamberlain fancy that he is discrediting the cause of Free Trade, or that we shall run away in dismay when the Protectionists have shown that England is not a paradise for the poor man? We never said it was. Our position is that poverty in a Free Trade country is nothing like the curse which it is in a Protectionist country where every crust of bread is taxed. We are not fanatics. We do not attribute to Free Trade miraculous powers, or claim for it that it can of itself remove the burden of poverty. We leave panaceas to others. But we don't want to see England turned once more into the poor man's purgatory, a place of unalleviated misery for the workman. We don't want another England of the 'thirties and the 'forties. We don't desire the return of the days when the labourer eked out his wages with the help of the Guardians, and when trade and agriculture were carried on by a universal system of out-relief, filched from the earnings of the poor. No, the Liberal Party, if it is worth its salt, will take up the cause of the poor man, will stand by the poor man, and see him through this business. But we do not leave the matter there, and content ourselves with nice sentiments. If there is a mass of poverty in this country co-existing with our ever-increasing collective wealth, we believe that much of it is preventible, and would be prevented if the principles of freedom and Liberalism were properly applied and enforced. Vested interests and the dead hand of the past lie heavy on this country of ours, and the Protectionist Party are willing and eager to have it so. What have they done in the last eighteen years but oppose all efforts to secure a better distribution of wealth and a fairer apportionment of taxation? Fiscal reform, indeed! Why, these fiscal reformers are the very men who have clamoured for broadening the basis of taxation; who, after squandering the national treasure on their interests and on their friends, and their career of adventure, come to the poor man to pay for it out of his bread and sugar and tea. Is it any wonder that millions of the people are ill-nourished?

All through these speeches[1] runs the idea that it was necessary not merely to combat Mr. Chamberlain's heresies, but to set up against them a constructive policy of social reform linked to a foreign policy which would enable the

[1] See especially Bolton (Oct. 15), Stirling (Oct. 22), and Frome (Nov. 17).

CHAP. XXIV. 1903.

world to be at peace. To conjure 'a new spirit out of the abyss of European militarism,' to relieve the burden of taxation by economy, to use State action wisely to redress the inequalities of opportunity, to cure intemperance, grapple with the land system, to banish sectarianism and concentrate upon real education, to make the Liberal Party the living and active instrument of these reforms was throughout this winter the burden of his appeal. Again and again, in private and in public, he urged Liberals not to let themselves be shut into a purely negative controversy with Mr. Chamberlain, and endeavoured always to pitch his own argument on positive and constructive lines. Though his handling of the economic side of the fiscal question was always competent, what chiefly impressed him was the social injustice of Protection and the danger of its being accepted as a remedy for evils which required quite other treatment. This was inconvenient to tacticians who were anxious lest Conservative and Unionist Free Traders should be alienated by the linking up of the anti-Tariff campaign with Liberal and Radical propaganda, but to Campbell-Bannerman it seemed of the highest importance that Liberalism should turn the controversy on social conditions which Mr. Chamberlain had raised into positive and fruitful channels.

Though he had always this serious purpose in view, he entered with spirit into the lighter side of the controversy, and when Mr. Balfour complained that his policy of Retaliation had received too little notice from the public, he made a lively and characteristic retort :—

Well, can you wonder. If a company of itinerant musicians comes into your street and the cornet strikes up a military march of resounding character, the gentleman with a concertina cannot expect to attract much notice. His performance may be very meritorious, but all we know is we cannot hear it. And perhaps I may carry the illustration a little farther. Your door-bell rings and the gentleman with the concertina comes to solicit a recognition. You take it for granted that anything you give to him will be shared by the noisier gentleman outside. Mr. Balfour

will perhaps not altogether admit this. He tells us that there are two separate and distinct performances, and that the simple and homely little melodies that he contributes—although they chime in with the louder performance—are meant to educate us —that means you and me—and ripen us so that by and by we shall be able to appreciate the fierce and warlike music which for the moment they seem to have little to do with. We have every reason to believe that the most perfect understanding exists between these two performers.—(Frome, Nov. 17.)

At other times his rebuke was in a more serious strain, as in the passage in the same speech—much quoted at the time —in which he contrasted two Prime Ministers :—

I have been dipping during the last two or three days into a book which has just been published—the *Life of Mr. Gladstone,* written by our friend—my friend and yours—Mr. John Morley. I hope every man and woman here will read that book, not only because of its absorbing interest, but because of its loftiness of tone and the splendour of its ideals, and also, let me add, because I believe that it will be an imperishable monument of English literature. I have been dipping into that book, I say, and I was caught by a phrase. It is not a striking phrase, there is nothing rhetorical about it, it has not an epigram in it, it has only plain, humdrum, everyday, commonplace words—and because of their very simplicity and naturalness all the more characteristic. Mr. Gladstone was writing to one of his sons, who was in India, a letter obviously never intended for publication. He was engaged at that time in preparing for the promulgation in the country of a great policy which he believed would work infinite good to the country. But he had great difficulties. He knew that his friends, many of them, were cool towards it. He knew that it was unpopular in influential quarters. He knew that in bringing it forward and in forming a Government for the purpose he was risking his own fame as a statesman and the interests of the party of which he was the head. But what he says to his son is this. He talks of the difficulties in his way, and then he says, 'But the great thing is to be right.' Not that the great thing is to be successful, not that the great thing is to be popular, not that the great thing is to preserve your majority in Parliament. The great thing is to be right. These are the words of a man. As long as he knew he was right, what did Mr. Gladstone reck of the difficulties and hostilities, the unpopularities,

CHAP. XXIV. 1903. intrigues, and odium, loss of votes, and loss of power? He incurred them all. He put it to the touch to win or lose it all. 'The great thing,' he said, 'is to be right.' These are two Premiers of the Empire. Look, I ask you, on this picture and upon that.

The fiscal controversy was not his only theme in this autumn and winter campaign. The South African War Commission Report,[1] published in August of this year, gave him the chance of retaliating upon his old enemies, and he used it with the less hesitation because they had somewhat audaciously revived the Cordite incident and attempted to throw on his shoulders the responsibility for what he considered to be their own lapses. In a speech at Newport (Nov. 30), he turned on Mr. Balfour and proved out of his own mouth the baselessness of the charge that the remissness of the previous Administration was the cause—four years later—of the Government's unpreparedness for the Boer War.[2] With the findings of the War Commission before him, he now repeated word by word the familiar indictment which had been the burden of his attack from October 1899 to the last day of the war:—

The indictment lies not at the door of any office or department; it lies at the door of the Cabinet itself. The charge against them is that they never counted the cost in men or money; that they undertook an enterprise far exceeding their provision for it; that they erred against the clearest light; that they had full information of the nature and requirements of the war and disregarded it; that they slammed the door against unpalatable opinion; that they listened to those outside the official circle who assured them that the Boers would not fight but would yield to threats and bluster; and that therefore they went light-heartedly into the war—that is the charge against them written on every page of this Blue-Book. It was no system, no office, no soldier, no civilian that brought the catastrophe—it was the Cabinet itself.

III

Thanks to Mr. Chamberlain, domestic peace was by now completely restored within the Liberal Party. In a speech

[1] C.D. 1789.

[2] See *supra*, vol. i. p. 157.

at Leicester (Nov. 7), Lord Rosebery, who had vigorously taken the field against Mr. Chamberlain on the imperial part of his policy, intimated that he was ready to work for common ends with a united Liberal Party. Campbell-Bannerman responded ten days later (Nov. 17) at Frome :— CHAP. XXIV. ÆT. 67.

It has given a great deal of satisfaction to every man among us to hear from Lord Rosebery that he is ready to share the labour and responsibility of public life in active co-operation with a united Liberal Party. This is, indeed, good news. All true Liberals will welcome his appeal for unity, especially at a time when the wisdom and vitality of the principles of Liberalism are being proved by events, as witness this fiscal and education question. Our doctrines on these subjects are not new doctrines. They are old doctrines with new life and vitality in them. What we have to do is to maintain unimpaired our fundamental principles without which the Liberal Party ought not to exist, those principles often tried, never found wanting, adapting them, as we ought to do, to new wants and circumstances, and for this purpose we rejoice to have again Lord Rosebery's co-operation.

This passage had the good luck to give unqualified satisfaction to all sections of the party. The Radicals inferred that there was to be no dilution of the doctrine or cleaning of the slate ; the Liberal Imperialists that the hatchet would be buried. The party generally was heartily relieved to be rid of the scandal which was caused by the fact that its two principal leaders were not—politically—on speaking terms. Campbell-Bannerman, as will be seen later, had some reserves. He hated quarrels and welcomed any accommodation which would save him from pursuing this one in public. But his test of complete co-operation was that Lord Rosebery should be definitely within the circle of ministeriable ex-Ministers, and about this he was still uncertain. His private opinion may be inferred from a letter to Lord Ripon :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

BELMONT, *Nov. 20,* '03.—It was most kind of you to write to me, for one is always a little doubtful whether the line taken is

CHAP. XXIV. 1903. the most expedient. We have had such a deluge of argument and of statistics that I thought a less serious treatment on general Party lines was what was wanted in order to inspirit and encourage our people. They were most friendly and enthusiastic, though not equal to a more northerly audience in real intelligent appreciation.

In handling the Rosebery matter I had three objects :—

1. To welcome his co-operation, which we have all always desired.

2. To eliminate the personal element by saying nothing about it, although he left it in about as misleading and ungracious an aspect as could have been imagined ; and

3. To make sure that he came back to the Liberal Party, and not the Party to him.

I hope it may be the end of the whole silly quarrel.

In proportion as the Liberal Party recovered its unity and efficiency, the Unionist position became more and more confused. The dissentients had formed a 'Free Food League,' and on the 24th of November held an impressive demonstration at the Queen's Hall under the chairmanship of the Duke of Devonshire, who spoke as an uncompromising Free Trader, and declared that he would have no part or lot in a policy founded on 'inversions of fact.' Lord Goschen spoke powerfully on the same side, and, though the door was kept just ajar by a sentence in the resolution expressing willingness 'to consider any Government proposals for mitigating the effects of hostile tariffs in certain cases,' there was no doubt that the vast majority of these demonstrators were unqualified Free Traders. A fortnight later the Duke of Devonshire took the decisive step of advising a Unionist elector of Lewisham (where a by-election was pending) to 'decline to give his support at any election to Unionist candidate who expressed his sympathy with the policy of Mr. Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform League.' All this was excellent propaganda for the country, but its effect, so far as Parliament was concerned, was more than neutralised by the unexpected appearance of Sir Michael Hicks Beach as a supporter of Mr. Balfour's policy of 'retaliation.' The dialectics at Sheffield which had

estranged the Duke of Devonshire had in some mysterious way converted Sir Michael, and on November 13 he appeared in company with Mr. Balfour at the Bristol Dolphin Banquet, to declare that 'the policy of his Rt. Hon. friend might secure infinite advantages to the country by expanding free trade.' The mystification was now complete, and men asked in a bewildered way what any of these distinguished people meant or whether they meant anything at all. Campbell-Bannerman had banked heavily on 'Michael and his angels,' and he knew at once what this speech meant. It meant undoubtedly that the great majority of the waverers would find salvation in the 'infinite advantages' which Retaliation offered to Free Trade, and endeavour to keep Mr. Balfour in power until the Parliament had run its course.

The letters of these months show some of the problems which he was called upon to solve :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

BELMONT, *Oct.* 19, '03.—I am glad to find, as usually happens, that I have been thinking your thoughts. From the first I have declared that the enemy was retaliation. The greater scheme runs its head against free food and breaks its neck. Also, the Britisher takes his Colonialism with qualifications, and is a little tired of having our 'over-sea kinsman' trotted out to overawe him.

But retaliation

(*a*) cultivates the ingrained fallacy that imports are an evil;
(*b*) captures the Chamber of Commerce sort of man by appealing to his self-interest;
(*c*) plays up to our pugnacity;
(*d*) has the air of an innocent compromise, and is a relief to the Free Trader who cannot swallow Joe's plan but does not wish to break with the Protectionists altogether: it is a 'statesmanlike *via media*.' Thus, I fear, 'the Duke' and others.

I have not heard, except from one source, anything of what you have heard of the London workman, but I can quite believe

there is something in it. From the rest of the country the accounts are all favourable.

I have more than once drawn the line at Catholics in Education. Here in Scotland there is no fear or jealousy of them, for they are not meddlesome—that cannot be said of the Anglicans in many places.

We have had a dreadful harvest. A leading farmer in my district, speaking at an agricultural dinner, described their evil plight by saying ' we are in the hands of Providence ' ; *i.e.* at the mercy of Providence : this he evidently thought the lowest depth of misfortune.

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. William Robertson

BELMONT, *Nov.* 25, '03.—Regarding your idea as to Rosebery coming to the Dunfermline meeting and taking the chair, I hardly think it would be judicious. We must not rush too precipitately into the opposite extreme to estrangement, and my feeling is that the best way to obliterate the evil effects of the past is to say as little about it as possible. The newspapers have fanned and puffed the thing into unholy dimensions—any dramatic and artificial performance would justify them and renew the old difficulties. I am content to have things as they are. Besides, is it usual for a stranger to take the chair at a Members' meeting ? I think it is always a constituent. We must also remember that although you and I have no *arrière-pensée* in the matter whatsoever, my lord is unco kittle cattle to drive.

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Bryce

BELMONT, *Nov.* 10, '03.— . . . I hear generally satisfactory accounts of the general conditions of things. J. C. has lost ground by his erratic arguments and his inaccuracy : and the dubiousness and discreditable character of the Government damp the ardour of many. Still, the appeal to cupidity, selfishness and pugnacity is a strong one.

Our friend Barnbougle [1] has not done the thing very nicely, but I suppose he must be greeted cordially. I am disposed, however, while decently effusive to contrive the introduction of a sort of understanding that the reconciliation is on the basis of the old faith, and that we are not merely a horse which this deft equestrian, booted and spurred, is to mount and ride whithersoever he listeth. That may be the idea of the new member for St. Andrews,

[1] Lord Rosebery (from Barnbougle Castle on the Dalmeny estate).

but it is not that of the party! This can be done without any offence.

I hope you have had a good time without much hard work. We have been quietly here, and my wife, I am thankful to say, has greatly gained. On Monday we move up to London, but probably only for a couple of days and then to the seaside.

To the same

BELMONT, *Dec.* 7, '03.— . . . I doubt whether—barring individual manufacturers, speculators and loafers—Joe is making much way; I should add fine ladies and 'swells' generally. But these were probably all protectionists at heart already, so far as they have heart and any knowledge.

There is a good deal of doubt what to do with the Free Fooders. *E.g.* there is Poynder,[1] who is with us on tariffs, on education and on temperance (the last a little doubtful). We have no man out against him; but the local people say we can win the seat. It will be very difficult to persuade our people to support him unless he absolutely comes over, and to begin with votes against the Government on the Address: and this last he probably would not do unless he was sure of our support. Then such a line makes it very difficult for constituencies where we have an equally good Free Fooder but a man of ours actually in the field.

Tweedmouth is full of a scheme for half a dozen voting with us on the Address resigning their seats and standing as Liberals. A little melodramatic for John Bull's taste! And after all Winston is hardly worth any increase of complications.

We have been here ten days, but the atrocious weather has been against us hitherto.

I had a tremendous time at Newport—I never saw anything like it! I do not think Joe has captured S. Wales.

The question of the 'Free Fooders' and their constituencies went backwards and forwards between the leaders and the Whips all through the winter months without any solution being arrived at. On December 26 he wrote to Mr. Gladstone:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Herbert Gladstone

DOVER, *Dec.* 26, 1903.—I had your letter with its enclosures this morning, and I have sent them on to Spencer, in continuation, as it were, of my letters to him. I have also written to

[1] Sir John Dickson Poynder, now Lord Islington.

CHAP. XXIV. 1903.

Asquith, to Oakham, asking if he can look in here in passing to have a little talk.

It is unfortunate that he is to be out of the country in the beginning of January—for I think no time should be lost. I confess I do not suck much comfort out of James's [1] statement of the case.

We must, of course, do all we can to make things easy for them and to strengthen their position, because it will strengthen ours. But as he puts it, it comes to this.

We are to withdraw candidates wherever our local people will allow it, in order to save the skin of the Free Traders.

In return the Free Traders are most of them to run away, or join the enemy, on any amendment to the Address.

Again, we are to be handled as if with a pair of tongs; but the 53 doubtful allies are to be represented equally with our whole Party on a joint body which is to control our electoral interests in the 53 constituencies. I fear our people will hardly see it.

Also, how feeble are the ideas of action when Parliament meets! An expression of gratification that the Speech makes no allusion to fiscal policy! Heavens! After all this storm!

Or, a protest against the disturbance of trade which delay will cause! This is true enough so far as it goes. But are we sure that it would not serve the cause of Free Trade better to let Joe's exaggerated campaign drag on, and become stale and sicken the country? There is a good deal to be said for that view.

Anyhow, these would be impotent conclusions. James does not seem to recognise that they are in a cleft stick, and that the time comes with the opening of Parliament which will show how many of the 53 are really in earnest and have the courage of their opinions; and when all who take refuge in such shallow devices as these may as well march into Joe's camp at once.

In short, we are under no necessity to go to them, and indeed cannot go to them: it is they who must come to us. This need not be proclaimed, but it is the essence of the situation and cannot be ignored.

I fear I am writing in a rather peremptory style, but it is well to put this view of the matter plainly before ourselves when we are considering what should be done. Even if all this is sound, I quite agree that we should deal frankly and generously with them. But I do not see much of the 'do ut des' in James's suggestions.

I will keep you promptly informed of all I hear from Spencer.

[1] Lord James of Hereford.

To Mr. Bryce he writes at the end of the year :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Bryce

DOVER, *Dec.* 29, '03.— . . . Our faithful enigma R. is still unsolved. Spencer (with full agreement of Ripon and myself) asked R. to give the Speech dinner on his behalf, and he refused. This between ourselves. He said all sort of inferences would be drawn.

I think there is no doubt Joe has got a large following. Is it, as Asquith has suggested to me, that the Tories were mostly protectionist at heart, and only hung back because such men as Howard Vincent and Jim Lowther were the only available leaders : now with such resplendent leaders they put on their true colours ? There is something in it.

I fear Gateshead is a bad place for us.[1]

I appreciate, and agree with, what you say about Education. Unless we are to have a general secular system, which is hopeless, what harm is there in the R.C.'s, where numerous enough and where there is an alternative, having a school of their own. They meddle with no one. It is our Anglican (our own familiar friend) who because he is so near to us is dangerous. But the N.Cons. are naturally and justifiably suspicious of concessions.

You have heard the story of Joe advising a friend to be prepared for a General Election in January ! But how is it possible ? What excuse is there ?

You kindly ask about my wife. She is better in general health since coming here, and has gained in muscular and nervous power. But on only three days was it possible for her to get out for a drive, and now this bitter cold wind has checked her progress.

I hope you are both of you flourishing. You have all our best wishes for the New Year, and I really hope that one way or other we shall have a better time politically. But oh ! the degraded, apathetic, sport-loving, empty-headed, vulgar lot that our countrymen have become. Jeshurun-like, they kick at any serious view of politics or morals. Our Swedish lady and friend who has been with us for some days was greatly amused that a Brassey in the House announces his retirement—why ?—because he finds Parliament interferes with his duties as Master of Hounds. She asks in what other country would this be seriously announced ?

[1] This anticipation proved unfounded. The seat was retained by a Liberal and Labour candidate with an increased majority (by-election, Jan. 4, 1904).

CHAP. XXIV. 1903.

IV

One event this autumn which gave him unalloyed pleasure was the presentation of the Freedom of Dunfermline (Oct. 31), an honour conferred by constituents which he was quite honest in professing to value above most other rewards of public life. He did not, like the average M.P., merely 'take pains with his constituents,' he established with them an intimate and neighbourly relationship with humour and understanding on both sides. He chaffed them and they chaffed him back; friends and opponents understood that, like themselves, he was a Scot against all comers. To the chairmen of his associations, Mr. James Smith and Mr. William Robertson (afterwards Sir James Smith and Sir William Robertson), he confided all his troubles and anxieties, consulting them about high affairs as he might the most confidential colleagues. 'The great advantage,' he said in acknowledging the compliment paid to him on this occasion, 'he had always had in dealing with his constituency was that by a sort of telepathy or telephonic communication he always knew when any novelty came into the sphere of politics, what view they would take of it, and therefore he never hesitated as to the course he should take himself.' A few characteristic phrases summed up their relationship :—

No man, they say, is a hero to his valet. I suspect that it is not every one—I hope I am not going to be indiscreet—who would risk going for a candid character even to the wife of his bosom. And similarly an intelligent and active-minded constituency could judge its member with a knowledge, with a justice, yes, and with a severity far exceeding the summary estimate of the outside world. They knew his weaknesses, of which his humanity had its due share; they knew his merits, if happily he possessed any. They had watched him and followed his actions; they had listened to him; they had heckled him. They had got bored with him and they had recovered and taken to him again and learned to put up with him. They had seen him in easy times and in difficult, in foul weather and in fair, when the tide of popularity was rising and when it was ebbing. They saw him praised in the public press and they winced under

it, for they knew how the praise was overdone. They saw him abused in the public press sometimes, and it only served to bring them closer to him. And after thirty-five years of service, and all those close and searching tests, they saw fit to proclaim him worthy of the highest honour at their disposal, the day of its bestowal must surely be one of the proudest days of his life.

The afternoon ceremony was followed by a banquet in the evening, and among the guests was Mr. Andrew Carnegie, a son of Dunfermline and another freeman, whose recent and princely munificence to his native town was justly praised. Lord Elgin and Mr. Thomas Shaw were among the speakers, and Campbell-Bannerman, acknowledging their compliments, declared himself to be 'that rare combination—a party politician totally devoid of ambition,' who 'did not soar for a moment to the lofty regions' that the Provost in proposing his health had hinted at. It was the literal truth, and his constituents knew him well enough to believe it.

His last word on the year 1903 was written to Mr. Bryce on December 31 :—

Is it not extraordinary how J. C. always plays up to the vulgarity and cupidity and other ignoble passions. Equally when he talks of ransom, when he promises acres and cows and pensions, when he annexes goldfields, when he bullies Kruger, when he Mafficks, when he promises preferences and tariffs and work. It is always the same ; and he uses the foolishness of the fool and the vices of the vicious to overwhelm the sane and wise and sober.

What a cheerful thought for New Year's Eve!

In comparison with those of more modern performers, Mr. Chamberlain's methods may seem mild and benevolent, but Campbell-Bannerman was always a politician of the old school.

CHAPTER XXV

HOPES DEFERRED

The Problem of the Unionist Free Traders—The Survival of Mr. Balfour—Hairbreadth Escapes—Vagaries, Gyrations, and Somersaults—Chinese Labour—A Question of Principle—Various Kinds of Ordinance—The Licensing Bill—The Leader's Tactics—The Anglo-French Convention—Warm Approval—Move to Belgrave Square—The Scottish Church Question—The Dogger Bank Incident—Death of Sir William Harcourt—Campbell-Bannerman's Tribute—Free Trade Speeches—The Flowing Tide.

AT the beginning of 1904 the Free Trade victory was by no means a foregone conclusion. Party managers had grave doubts whether Mr. Chamberlain's appeals to the manufacturing interests—appeals *ad hominem* and *ad locum*, and most ingeniously varied to suit the needs of different constituencies—might not affect a considerable number of voters. Trade was depressed and Tariff Reformers did not scruple to tell the unemployed that their plight was due to Free Trade and would be instantly relieved by a tariff. Whether the general unpopularity of the food taxes would outweigh these appeals to special interests had yet to be seen. Constituencies with industries specially exposed to foreign competition were reported to be wavering, and urgent appeals went out for speakers and lecturers to keep them steady. For a few weeks the stream of popular disfavour which had been running steadily against the Government appeared to have been arrested. The re-election of Ministers on the reconstruction of the Government had been carried through without mishap, and one seat, Rochester, had even been lost to the Opposition. It was reported from that constituency that cement had yielded to Mr. Chamberlain's

blandishments; in another glass was said to be doubtful, and Tariff Reformers professed to have high hopes of boots and steel.

Campbell-Bannerman was as certain as ever that all would come right, but he was a little anxious about some of these manifestations, and, in spite of the difficulties revealed in the letters published in the last chapter, he turned his thoughts seriously to the possibility of accommodation with the Unionist Free Traders for the coming fight. For the moment the Nonconformists were the chief obstacle. Feelings were bitter about the Education Act. Passive resisters were having their goods sold up; the Welsh Local Authorities were almost without exception resisting the administration of the Act, and the Government had a measure on the stocks by which the Board of Education should finance Church schools in Wales and deduct the cost from parliamentary grants due to Welsh County Councils.[1] Nevertheless he had soundings taken to see if some concordat was possible which would enable the Free Trade Unionists to obtain Nonconformist support in case of an election. He wrote to Mr. Bryce on January 15:—

What Herbert [Gladstone] says is this: If they [the Nonconformists] are unconvinceable, it will mean loss of seats and damage to Free Trade and *to Education*. Whereas if they would consent in certain places to back the Unionist Free Trader, and to give latitude in other places to men who are faced with heavy Church or R.C. odds, we could strengthen the general position. *E.g.* Ritchie, to oppose him is an absurdity, but the local men wish to, and probably will, fight him *on Education*.

With such a fight before us we must make the fullest use of these Unionist Free Trade stalwarts. Could Clifford and Co. be persuaded that this is as much their game as ours?

I think some pourparlers would be of immense importance.

Mr. Bryce tried his hand, but without any immediate results.

[1] Carried through the House of Commons under guillotine closure on Aug. 5, after a stormy debate in which, after several of them had been named by the Chairman for refusing to leave the House when the division was called, the Welsh members, led by Mr. Lloyd George, declined to take any further part in the discussion.

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

The answer seems to have been that while the Nonconformist leaders trusted Campbell-Bannerman, they were less certain about some of his colleagues and could not sacrifice their principles even to Free Trade. The Unionist Free Traders were equally shy, and for many months to come it remained doubtful whether more than a very small number would welcome any advance from the Radical side which would require them to break with their own party. He nevertheless persisted in these efforts, and perpetually urged that, even if the number of M.P.'s who could be gathered in was inconsiderable, the number of voters who might be conciliated was not. A less generous man might have reflected on the results to his own position of leavening the Liberal Party with this new moderate element, and he certainly was not unaware that he himself was considered to be one of the chief obstacles.

During the first weeks of 1904 the gossip among politicians was of a Devonshire Government or a Rosebery Government, or any other combination which would satisfy converts from the other side, many of whom were saying openly that they would do anything except 'serve under C.-B.' Patriotic sacrifices they would make, provided these stopped short of having to accept as Prime Minister the man who had encouraged the enemy and talked of 'methods of barbarism' during the Boer War. It was characteristic of 'C.-B.' that he was foremost in plans for conciliating these people, and joined cheerfully in discussing the various ways of eliminating himself. All of them, however, omitted two factors, first the Liberal rank and file, who were more and more determined that the Liberal position should not be compromised by any bargaining behind their backs, and secondly Mr. Balfour, who, it soon appeared, had no intention whatever of giving anybody the opportunity of forming a Government a moment sooner than he was compelled.

When Parliament met on February 2, Campbell-Bannerman made an effective speech containing a good deal of persiflage and some serious criticism of ministerial changes and ambiguities. 'Familiar faces,' he said, 'one found in

strange places, and strange faces in familiar places. Is it a new Government? I said "practically a new Government." I thought that was safe, although not very definite. Is it a new Government with a new policy or the old Government with a new policy? The old Government may be on the front bench more or less, but the old policy is mostly on the back benches. But then on the back benches also is the leader of the new policy. I confess I give it up. The situation is too bewildering, and the only way to cure the confusion is to appeal to the common sense of the electors of the country.' An analysis followed of the singular relations of the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary in the previous years and of the latter's impetuous attempt to rush his colleagues by public speeches before consulting or convincing them in Cabinet; and the speech concluded with a scornful dismissal of the so-called 'policy' of the Government:—

> What wonder if we regard the declared policy of His Majesty's Government as a mere *hors-d'œuvre*, as trumpery as it is indigestible, to whet the appetite for bigger dishes—a mere *lever de rideau* designed to prepare the minds of the audience for the full five-act tragedy of Protection.

The metaphors, it is to be observed, are consecutive and not mixed; but speakers in these days were engaged in a breathless chase after images which might be adequate to the incessant transformations of Government policy.

II

The history of the next two years is the story of Mr. Balfour's effort to maintain his Government against both Chamberlainites and Free Traders. It was a feat which required a unique combination of nimbleness, wariness, and subtlety. To all outward seeming his position was desperate. There were enough Free Traders in the House, or at all events enough who objected to Mr. Chamberlain's policy, to make the defeat of the Government probable and the disruption of the Unionist Party certain if the Prime

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

Minister accepted it. But there were also enough Chamberlainites to make the same results certain if he rejected it. The Chamberlainites were willing that the Government should continue while they converted the country; the Unionist Free Traders were unwilling to displace it so long as there was a chance of averting the threatened schism in their party. With supporters actuated by these opposite motives, the Government could only find safety by giving both parties colourable ground for supposing, or pretending to suppose, that it would ultimately be found on their side. Mr. Balfour's own policy, the official policy of retaliation, had by the beginning of 1904 become negligible. Except the Prime Minister himself, no one propounded it or defended it or professed to regard it as anything but a temporary shelter for politicians in distress. The battle raged between Chamberlainites and Free Traders over the whole fiscal issue, and the Government kept the ring on the implied condition that it was ready to accept any result which popular opinion seemed to favour. The Prime Minister, said a contemporary observer at the beginning of 1904, 'was on his own showing a Free Trader who sympathised with Protection, a well-wisher of the food taxes who was also their official opponent, and his object was to secure Free Trade by a fundamental reversal of the fiscal system, which would commit the country definitely to protection.'

Mr. Balfour walked this tight rope all through the sessions of 1904 and 1905, to the breathless amazement of all spectators. Again and again he seemed to have lost his balance and again and again by some ingenious stroke recovered it. Illness kept him away from the House on the first days of the session of 1904, and in his absence the Home Secretary all but upset the Government by declaring bluntly that it was 'opposed to any duty on raw material or food' (Feb. 15). A fortnight later (March 9) the Government majority fell to 46 on a Free Trade resolution moved by Mr. Pirie, and on this occasion Mr. Balfour was compelled by a meeting of Chamberlainites to withdraw an amendment (put down by one of his own friends with the knowledge of the

Whips) approving 'the explicit declaration of His Majesty's Ministers that their policy of fiscal reform does not include either a general system of Protection or a Preference based on the taxation of food.'[1] The Chamberlainites were willing, for tactical reasons, that the Government policy should not include a general system of Protection or the taxation of food, but it was against their compact—or so they declared—that the Government should ask the House to approve these exclusions from the official policy. On May 18 the Government was again in extreme peril on a resolution moved by a Liberal member, Mr. Black, 'that this House, believing that the protective taxation of food would be burdensome to the people and injurious to the Empire, welcomes the declaration of Ministers that the Government is opposed to such taxation.' Once more the Chamberlainites pleaded their compact, and their leader put down an amendment which asked the House 'to take note of the opinion expressed by the Prime Minister in favour of a change in our fiscal policy, and of his declaration that such a change cannot be advantageously undertaken in the present Parliament,' and thereupon to 'express its continued confidence in His Majesty's Government.' At a meeting over which the Duke of Devonshire presided on May 16, the Unionist Free Traders unanimously decided to support the Black resolution, and for a moment the fate of the Government seemed to be sealed. But Mr. Balfour was equal to this occasion also, and boldly put down another amendment declaring 'discussion either of fiscal reform or the Prime Minister's declaration to be unnecessary, since no proposals would be laid before the present Parliament,' and inviting the House to proceed with its ordinary business. This offered a way of escape to wavering Unionists, and once more the Government survived. The subject was given a rest till August 1, when Campbell-Bannerman himself moved a resolution regretting that 'certain of His Majesty's Ministers had accepted official positions in a

[1] See letter 'to an Oldham constituent,' by Mr. Winston Churchill. (March 10, 1904.)

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

political organisation [The Tariff Reform League] which has formally declared its adhesion to a policy of preferential duties involving the taxation of food.' In a searching argument he set out the ambiguities of the position, and pointedly asked the Prime Minister why he had not 'asked his colleagues to take their choice between the offices they held under his control and the offices they had accepted in Mr. Chamberlain's Cabinet.' The question naturally remained unanswered, but on this occasion the Unionist Free Traders found excuses for abstaining and the Government majority rose to 78.

'No imagination,' said Mr. Birrell in a characteristic outburst, 'can be too fertile, no cynicism too extreme, no language too biting, to picture and describe the possible vagaries, gyrations, and somersaults of the ambitious politician in the grip of circumstances.' But for all this biting language the Government survived, and ambitious politicians who week by week were predicting its downfall were baffled and disappointed. Once more the cry went up that this was due to the inefficiency of the Opposition, and Campbell-Bannerman was again the subject of sharp criticism for his supposed failure to take advantage of such an opening as Mr. Balfour's proceedings appeared to offer. The Chamberlainites themselves were heard saying that if only their leader had been in Opposition with half the cards to play that were in the hands of C.-B. and his colleagues, he would have made short work of the game of skill which was being played from the Ministerial bench. This was an easy gibe, but the Government was in fact saved by the very success of the Opposition. Before the summer of 1904 the opinion of the country had become unmistakable. Seat after seat was won at by-elections and by majorities so large that even the 'safest' could not be counted secure. To put out to sea in such a storm no longer seemed a promising enterprise either to Chamberlainites or Balfourites, and still less to the Free Fooders who had no safe port to run to in any stress of weather.

III

For these reasons, the general expectation that Mr. Chamberlain would force a dissolution in the summer of this year was disappointed. He was resigned, so his friends said, to defeat by a narrow margin at the next election, but he expected the Government that followed to be a brief interlude quickly hissed off the stage, which would then be clear for the real drama. He too, therefore, had every reason for seeking to avoid the complete disaster which threatened to blast these hopes, if by delay or any other expedient it could be avoided. In his view the hostility of the country was due not to Tariff Reform, but to another subject which had made a most disconcerting and untimely appearance—that of Chinese Labour in the Rand mines. Undoubtedly the unpopularity of the proposed importation of Chinese was immense. The public had watched with growing disfavour the revelations of the War Commission, the refusal of the Rand magnates to take up their share of the war debt, and the evident failure of the dream that South Africa after the war would be a new and promising field for British emigration. But it was the last touch in the crescendo of disillusion that a war fought, as the country had been told, to prevent a retrograde civilisation from being imposed upon South Africa should lead to an influx of Chinese under conditions barely if at all distinguishable from slavery. The conditions were judged to be abominable, but that the thing should be proposed at all seemed incredible and preposterous to the man in the street.

It was agreed ground that food taxes were unpopular and extremely doubtful whether other parts of the Protectionist policy were winning any approval, but to add Chinese labour to food taxes seemed very like insanity to party men ; and the Unionist rank and file now asked in bewilderment what their leaders were at. Campbell-Bannerman was from the first a serious and convinced opponent of the Chinese Labour Ordinance. To his mind it presented one of those simple cases of Liberal principle about which no

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

man professing to be a Liberal could possibly be in doubt. The Ordinance proposed that the Chinese were to come for a fixed term of years, at the end of which they were to be re-exported to China at the cost of the importer. While in South Africa, they were to live in compounds from which they were forbidden to go out except on a permit limited to forty-eight hours and to the Witwatersrand district. They were forbidden to hold any 'fixed' property or mineral rights or to engage in any business but 'unskilled labour' in the mines, which was to be for ten hours in the day and six days in the week. They had no right of access to the Courts, and, as the Ordinance was originally presented, no guarantee of a minimum wage, though a minimum of 2s. a day was subsequently laid down. Fourteen offences were defined and special penalties outside the ordinary laws provided. The conditions were plainly such that though the Chinese were not actually forbidden to bring their wives and children, they could not in fact do so; and when the first batch of 4000 arrived it was elicited that no wives and children had come at all. All these provisions seemed to Campbell-Bannerman a plain violation of the conditions on which a self-respecting country could sanction the importation of labour, and he was early in the field in opposing them and in urging his colleagues to do the same.

He sounded the alarm on this subject in the debate on the Address, and himself took charge of a vote of censure which was moved on March 21. He went straight to the point that the mine-owners wanted the Chinese as labourers, but were not willing to take them as free men :—

As to liberty, let us free our minds of illusions. The Ordinance is necessary because the sentiment of South Africa is opposed to the admission of Chinamen as free men. They must have cheap labour, we are told. The Chinese will afford it. But then they are face to face with the dilemma. Either they must let them loose over the country, in which case there will be degradation and infection of every kind, demoralisation, competition in trade and other things that are objected to, and a new race will be

introduced where racial difficulties are serious enough already. But if we take the other horn of the dilemma, then they must be shut up and segregated from the community, and it is difficult to find where the difference lies between that and positive slavery. The essence of the law is that the Chinaman is a chattel. The fourteen offences are incomprehensible on any other assumption. The labourer is forbidden to hold property, he is forbidden to engage in any other work but the specified unskilled work he is sent there for. If he deserts, any man who shelters him may be sent to prison for thirty days as if he were a receiver of stolen goods. He is not to leave the compound without permission, and he has no guarantee that that permission will ever be given. If his wife and family come, they must live under the same conditions—*i.e.* immured in what has been called a garden city and liable to arrest if they go outside. When his contract expires he is shipped off, unless of course the contract is renewed. I have said that is very like slavery—it is so like that it is almost indistinguishable. Well, these are, at all events, uncommonly like slave laws. 'Indentured labour' no doubt sounds better; but do not let us haggle over words; let us see what the thing itself is.

The answer of the Government was not to deny these allegations, but to plead that provisions like these or resembling them were to be found in other labour ordinances for which Liberal Governments had been responsible. To this Liberals replied that, whether these other ordinances were good or bad, there was at least one vital distinction between them and the Chinese Ordinance, namely, that the former confined themselves to securing the execution of the contract between labourer and employer, whereas the latter, as Mr. Asquith said, sought deliberately to 'prevent the labourer from getting into free contact or communication with the community, and to keep him in a situation which no Government had ever ventured or ever would venture to keep any subject of the King, however humble he might be or from whatever quarter of the Empire he might come—a situation from which he could not aspire to rise, however frugal, industrious, thrifty, or public-spirited he might be, a situation in which he could

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

never aspire to be a living member of the community.' All the talent of Liberal lawyers was now employed in developing the distinctions between the Chinese Ordinance and the former ordinances, and they were, indeed, many and vital. But Campbell-Bannerman cared little for this part of the controversy. He said frankly that he thought many of the former ordinances abominable, and that he had no intention whatever of letting his supposed but fictitious responsibility for the proceedings of some former Colonial Secretary stand in the way of his protest against this new and worse abomination.[1]

Holding these views, he greatly resented the statement made by the Secretary of the Tariff Reform League that the Liberal leaders, or some of them, while encouraging the agitation in public, had 'pledged themselves not to alter the present arrangement,' *i.e.* the Chinese Ordinance, if they came back to power. This he denounced as an 'absolute fabrication,' and his friends only wondered if it was worth denying. No man at any time was less capable of this kind of duplicity, and on the question of the Chinese Ordinance he felt the fundamentals of Liberal doctrine to be at stake. His own argument on the subject was always temperate and serious, but when Ministerialists complained that they were the innocent victims of an outrageous agitation for what at the worst was a trivial or tactical error, he maintained that the popular instinct was profoundly right in branding the Ordinance as repugnant to the first principles of liberty and humane policy in the British Empire.

[1] Another line of argument developed by the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lyttelton, was that the Ordinance was for the benefit of the Chinese and that it would be a 'deplorable thing by the exercise of His Majesty's prerogative to prevent the coming of a Chinaman sunk in desperate poverty, who is anxious and willing to work, and who would receive in the Transvaal at least 2s. a day, which is fourteen or fifteen times as much as he would receive in his own country.' In the same vein a Johannesburg clergyman said he was 'much attracted by the possibility of evangelistic work among these people under very favourable conditions, and he hoped to see many of them sent back to their country good practising Christians.'

IV

During the course of the session Mr. Balfour repeated the promise already given by the Whips to their supporters, that if they would remain faithful to the Government it would not burden them with over-much legislation. There was in fact only one measure of importance this session, and that was the Licensing Bill deemed necessary by the Unionist Party to deal with the situation created by the decision of the House of Lords in the case of Sharpe *v.* Wakefield. In this it was laid down that a licence was legally for one year and for one year only, and could be revoked by the justices at their discretion and without requiring evidence of misconduct on the part of the licensee. The assumption, though always questioned by lawyers, that a licence was automatically renewable, except in cases of misconduct, had for so long been accepted by both justices and licensees that this decision caused consternation to 'the Trade.' The great brewing companies had invested immense funds in tied-houses which would become an extremely precarious property if they had no more than a yearly tenure, and for months past they had brought the whole of their influence to bear on the Tory Party and the Government to obtain a revision of the law before a general election.

Sharpe *v.* Wakefield played the same part on the Licensing question as the Cockerton judgment in the Education question. It was generally admitted that some change in the law was necessary, but the public was certainly not prepared for the change which Mr. Balfour proposed. This was that, except for misconduct or for reasons connected with the suitability of the premises, the licence should never be refused unless the 'persons interested' were compensated. The effect of this was to convert the licence into a freehold and immensely to increase the value of public-houses. In return 'the Trade' were required to submit to a very moderate tax on existing licences and to a special payment in respect of new licences for the formation of a compensation fund for the extinction of old licences. Temperance reformers alleged that the increased values

CHAP. XXV. 1904. would run into hundreds of millions and the compensation fund be no more than a million per annum at the outside. In another respect the Bill offended both Liberal and Temperance ideas. It virtually transferred the whole power of refusing licences from the local magistrates to Quarter Sessions, from an authority which presumably knew local conditions to an authority which was remote from them. Under the new proposals the local justices, except in county boroughs, could do no more than report to Quarter Sessions. This and other parts of the Bill flew in the face of both the minority and majority reports of Lord Peel's Commission, and was generally interpreted as an attempt to disarm an authority which had fallen under the suspicion of 'the Trade.'

Campbell-Bannerman was not of the extreme school of Temperance reformers, and a few months previously he had come into collision with 'Old Lawson [1] and his battle-axe' for airing opinions which seemed heretical to that zealous opponent of 'the Trade.' But it seemed to him outrageous that the Government should make proposals of this kind at the fag-end of the Parliament and without any authority from the constituencies. The compensation question ought in his view to have been settled by a time-limit with a descending scale of compensation coming gradually to a vanishing point, which would leave the State free to deal with the whole question on a new basis, whereas the Government proposals established 'the Trade' in a new entrenchment and fatally compromised the position for future legislation. From the beginning the whole Opposition was united in resisting this measure, and Campbell-Bannerman himself took an active part both in and out of the House of Commons. He was, however, totally opposed to the 'heroics'—walking out of the House, getting suspended by the Speaker—which some of the fighting spirits urged upon the front bench when the Government proceeded to force the Bill through under drastic guillotine closure. The advice which he gave the

[1] See *supra*, vol. i. p. 263.

Whips was to concentrate upon one or two amendments, and especially upon that put down by a Conservative member (Sir W. Houldsworth) in favour of the time-limit. Here his sanguine spirit, fitting in with the mood of the hour, saw a real opportunity of defeating the Government if the matter were discreetly handled and Unionist critics encouraged by a display of sweet reasonableness. He was so far justified in these tactics that the Government majority was reduced to 41 on the Houldsworth amendment—a very clear intimation to the Prime Minister of the uneasiness of his party at the high-handed rejection of an obviously reasonable proposal—but before the end of July the Government had forced their Bill through under guillotine closure with only a fifth part of it discussed.

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All through this year as the previous year Campbell-Bannerman had been active in criticising the ever-shifting schemes of the Government for Army Reform. He had denounced Mr. Brodrick's still-born Army Corps scheme as expensive, grandiose, and unsuitable to the needs of the Empire, and he brought all his knowledge of the War Office and its administration to the scrutiny of Mr. Arnold Forster's intricate and elaborate plans for dividing the Home Army from the Foreign, absorbing the Militia into the Line, running short service side by side with long service, reducing the Volunteers, churning up the old material into new forms and shapes. The difficulty of these proposals was that they seemed always to recede into the future as they were approached, and that it was almost impossible to ascertain whether they represented the private opinions of Mr. Arnold Forster or the opinions of the Government and whether the Army Council did not differ from both. In criticising them, Campbell-Bannerman had generally behind him the Service opinion on both sides of the House and a considerable body of opinion in the War Office. He was always a careful and discriminating critic, but what he chiefly disliked was the lack of precision and coherence in these plans, and the constant

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

tendency, as he thought, to 'dress the shop window' without affecting any serious reforms. At the same time he gave very careful attention to the Report of the Committee of Three—Lord Esher, Sir John Fisher, and Sir George Sydenham Clarke—which had been appointed at the beginning of this year to deal with the organisation of the War Office. Frankly he disliked this method of 'renovating the military shrine,' and he stigmatised one portion of the Report as a 'mixture of the pontifical and the hysterical.'[1] But he heartily consented to its principal proposals—the Army Council, the General Staff, and the Committee of Defence—and later, when Prime Minister, took full responsibility for their development under Mr. Haldane's scheme.

But the most important event of this year, and the principal achievement of Mr. Balfour's Government, lay in the sphere of Foreign Policy. Early in the year it became known that Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne were negotiating a Convention with France which should put an end to the numerous causes of wrangling and friction which from the Fashoda incident onwards had marred our relations with our nearest neighbour in Europe. The subjects dealt with were to the outward eye wholly extra-European. They concerned Egypt, Morocco, Siam, Madagascar, Newfoundland Fisheries,[2] and other similar matters on which the policy of the two Powers had in recent years degenerated into a series of pin-pricks and counter-pricks. It was manifestly good sense that they should agree with each other to have done with these and come to a mutual agreement on

[1] House of Commons, March 29, 1904.

[2] The Anglo-French Convention, presented in the form of a Bill for the consent of Parliament, dealt specifically in three agreements with the questions of Egypt and Morocco, Newfoundland Fisheries and the rectification of frontiers in the Colony of Gambier, the cession of islands off the coast of French Guinea, and the modification of the Nigerian boundary; and contained a general declaration covering Siam, Madagascar, and the New Hebrides. In regard to Egypt and Morocco the two Powers agreed to 'afford to one another their diplomatic support in order to obtain the execution of the clauses of the present Declaration.' For agreements and correspondence see

unsettled questions which, if left open, would certainly continue to embitter their relations and might even be dangerous to peace.

The conclusion of such an agreement seemed unalloyed gain to all parties, and when the Anglo-French Convention Bill was introduced into the House of Commons on June 1, it was received with a chorus of praise in which Campbell-Bannerman most cordially joined. He was a natural Francophil. He spoke French perfectly; was an omnivorous reader of French books, and never happier than with French friends and on French soil. He, therefore, spoke *con amore* on this occasion :—

All these [*i.e.* minor] considerations are swallowed up when we contemplate this Agreement as a great instrument for bringing together two neighbouring nations and two old rivals—two nations that have been separated by what is believed to be inborn hereditary enmity—and for promoting friendship and co-operation between the two nations—I do not wish to speak invidiously about other nations—but probably the two nations of Europe most identified with progress and freedom. It has always seemed to me to be a most extraordinary thing that there should be a feeling of jealousy and almost antipathy encouraged between France and England, when really they are the nations of all others that ought to go hand in hand in the work of civilising and developing the world. That, fortunately, we have no longer to regret. I do not know where it is possible accurately to apportion the credit for this achievement. The King in this country and the President in France, the Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers on both sides all deserve our thanks for the part they have taken; and we all appreciate their wise and earnest action in this matter. I share the hope freely expressed in this debate that this arrangement with France may be a model for other arrangements with other countries, and an example of the way in which those traditional differences, which may sometimes be acute, but which are also sometimes in themselves on the verge of being absurd, can be disposed of when goodwill and the desire to be friends prevail instead of that jealousy and rivalry with which we have all sometimes been puzzled. The House will echo the general feeling of the country, which is one of intense satisfaction at the conclusion of this Convention.

CHAP. XXV. 1904. Sir Edward Grey on the same occasion strongly endorsed Lord Percy's description of the Convention as a working-model for other cases, and his own effort to conclude a similar agreement with Germany in the last year before the Great War proves this to have been no random observation. But in June 1904 the ultimate consequences of this Entente, and above all the construction which would be put upon it by the German Government, were hidden from the great mass of the public and from most of the politicians. It was assumed that no other Power would object, or could have the right to object, to an effort on the part of the two Powers to secure the peace with one another in matters purely of their own concern.

To an inner circle which knew the ways of European diplomacy more of the truth was perhaps revealed. 'For some years past careful observers of the drift of events had been persuaded that an Anglo-French rapprochement was a necessity of British policy. We had angled for a German alliance and been snubbed for our pains. Germany was building a fleet which seemed plainly intended to challenge the British fleet, and the Emperor had spoken out loud of her 'getting the trident into her fist,' and described himself as 'Admiral of the Atlantic.' We might outbuild this fleet and render ourselves secure in single combat, but our position would plainly be perilous if, in our splendid isolation, we had to face the enmity of France as well as that of Germany and her allies. Naval experts pointed out that we might in a comparatively short time be compelled to concentrate our forces in the North Sea, and that our position in the Mediterranean would be precarious, if one of the principal Mediterranean Powers was an ally of Germany and the other of an unfriendly or doubtful disposition. From this point of view it seemed imperative to make all necessary sacrifices to secure the friendship of France.

It would be foolish to suppose that these simple postulates of European policy were hidden from Campbell-Bannerman and his colleagues on the Opposition front bench. But from their point of view, and from all Liberal

points of view, it seemed pure gain to end the dangerous bickerings which had marred our relations with the French, and it could not be counted loss if at the same time we strengthened our position in the balance of power, which in these days was the ruling principle of European statesmanship. Lord Rosebery alone among the eminent men of this time had his doubts about the ultimate consequences of linking British and French policy together in the manner implied in this agreement, and he counselled more careful consideration before the new policy was whole-heartedly endorsed by the Opposition. But this seemed an unnecessarily sceptical and suspicious view, and was thought to be coloured by his own unfortunate experience of French diplomacy when Foreign Secretary. Liberals warmly welcomed a closer relationship with a Power which they regarded as specially Liberal and democratic, and if there was to be any departure from splendid isolation, they considered friendship with France far more in keeping with the natural and traditional policy of Great Britain than the alliance with German absolutism to which, six years earlier, Mr. Chamberlain had turned his eyes.

So far as the official spokesmen were concerned, the debate on the Convention was a model of propriety and discretion. No presentiment of the vast upheaval which was to follow this act of policy appeared to cross the minds of any of them. The Convention was presented and accepted unanimously as a welcome and sensible settlement of troublesome outstanding Colonial questions between the two nations. If it helped to more cordial general relations, that, in the judgment of all parties, was the greatest gain of all. No other Power was even mentioned or glanced at by any of the official speakers. Alone among private members, Mr. Gibson Bowles ventured a sentence which broke through this admirable decorum. 'There are stalking through Europe,' he said, 'ambitions which must be curtailed and which may develop to a greater degree than seems at present possible. 'Against such it is well to raise a visible barrier in England and France.'

CHAP. XXV.

1904.

Having moved his fiscal vote of censure, Campbell-Bannerman went as usual to Marienbad in the first week of August, leaving his colleagues to wind up the session. A fortnight later he writes to Mr. Bryce :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Bryce

MARIENBAD, *Aug.* 22, '04.—We had a trying journey here and for ten days I was completely laid up with a good deal of fever—the main cause being that I was much run down in health. I am now quite well again and hope to gain much good now that I can get about. My wife has gained strength greatly and feels better than she has done for many months. We will extend our holiday in mid-Europe as long as we can, and with that view I am making no engagements before the last week in October.

I thought the session ended well: our *franc-tireur* keeping it up spiritedly to the last and A. J. B. completing the picture by his performances at Cambridge.[1] I can't but think that must have opened the eyes of many people to his real mental attitude, and they will see the cause of the morass into which he has led administration and legislation and real party Government alike.

The Scottish Church question is going to be a very big one, going far beyond the immediate quarrel. I think politicians had better keep out of it as long as they can and not 'scaud their moo blowing ither folks' kail.' The question is penetrated and twisted by old scores, old jealousies, and old hypocrisies, and these may play the mischief with the best and truest of sentiments.

He reports the 'great man' (King Edward) to be at Marienbad, 'beset with a cloud of buzzing blue-bottles,' but 'civil enough to decent people,' and 'loyally following the cure.' 'Weather superb and the place crammed.' His hope of prolonging his holiday till the end of October was disappointed. From Marienbad he went on to Vienna at the end of September, and on October 18 returned to 'camp' in 29 Belgrave Square, to which he had moved from 6 Grosvenor Place. 'I have sold my house in London,' he reports in a letter to a Scottish friend, 'which we have

[1] Aug. 22.

for some time contemplated doing. It had become rather noisy, and in many ways jarred on my wife's nerves, so we are glad to change, but it will be rather an undertaking. The paragraphs in the newspapers about it were, as usual, quite absurd and preposterous.' The said paragraphs had hinted that he was drawing in his horns and contemplating the life of repose 'to which his years and long services entitled him.' Nothing was farther from his thoughts, but the big house with its steep stairs and double frontage breasting a stream of traffic either way had become irksome to his wife, and he gladly withdrew to the comparative quiet of Belgrave Square.[1] CHAP. XXV. ÆT. 67-68.

After picnicking for a few days in the new house and attending the Colchester Oyster Feast ('What an entertainment for a man who is bound under oath never to eat an oyster!'), he reached his 'haven of repose' at Belmont on the last day of October. The repose was brief. 'We have a campaign on hand,' he writes to Mr. Bryce, 'and unfortunately very little ammunition for it. You will have noticed how A. J. B. took advantage of the Dogger Bank crisis to evade the necessity of saying anything more about fiscalities: and as Joe is away and in his two recent speeches merely repeated his old fallacies, there is really nothing wherewith to quicken the stale controversy.' But in Scotland the heather was on fire with the Church controversy, and a Scottish leader and Scottish M.P. could by no means remain indifferent to it, much as he might wish to keep clear of that desperate theological tangle. At least

[1] In March he had written to Mr. William Robertson, 'I am more or less trying to sell this house, and this is easily explained: 1st, it involves a good deal of money, and being leasehold (as nearly all London houses are) I am not willing to let the lease run so long as to injure the value. 2nd, coincidently with this, as we have lived here for nearly thirty years, it wants doing up—and under the circumstances of No. 1 I have no great stomach for this. 3rd, my wife having been so ill in it for the last two or three years has come to associate it with suffering, and this just turns the scale.' He used to boast that the area of 6 Grosvenor Place was the finest trap for runaway cabs in London. A considerable number of them were precipitated through or over the railings. 'Eighteen pennorth of danger' was his description of taking a hansom to the House of Commons.

one speech had to be made on it.[1] He had been brought up on Scottish Church controversy, and he knew all about it or at least as much as any one knew until its infinite variety was newly explored in the remorseless argument which had kept the House of Lords spellbound for months together in the spring of this year. Here fortunately he had at his elbow an adept of adepts in Mr. Haldane, who had surpassed himself in expounding the legal bearings of the doctrine of Predestination before that tribunal. In politics Mr. Haldane had proved a somewhat refractory colleague, but on this common ground Scot clasped the hands of brother Scot, and the rest of the front bench cheerfully surrendered their consciences into the keeping of these competent hands.

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In the last week of October the public were stirred to a sudden anger by the news that the Russian fleet, crossing the North Sea on its way to its grave at Tshu-Shima, had fired on a British fishing-boat, sinking one vessel and killing and wounding some half-dozen fishermen. The Government at once sent a remonstrance which was very like an ultimatum to Russia, and for a few days the country seemed

[1] Edinburgh, Nov. 5. The Free Church minority which had stood out of the Union of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches in 1900 brought actions against the Trustees of the funds of their former Church restraining the proposed transfer of these funds to the new Trustees appointed by the United Free Church. The grounds of these actions were that the United Free Church had departed from the original beliefs of the Church of Scotland, (1) in abandoning the doctrine of Church Establishment which the founders of the Free Church in 1843 continued to hold in principle though compelled by circumstances to renounce the existing Establishment. (2) In modifying by a declaratory Act, passed in 1892 and accepted by the United body, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal life or death, irrespective of conduct, as set forth in the Westminster Confession. These actions were twice decided adversely by the Scottish Judges, but the House of Lords had overruled the Scottish Courts, with the result that the Free Church minority (the 'Wee Frees') with its 26 congregations found itself in legal possession of the lands, property, and funds hitherto enjoyed by the 1104 congregations which now belonged to the United Free Church. The question was finally settled, as suggested by Sir Henry in this speech, by the appointment of a Royal Commission to make a fair division between the two Churches, and the passing of a Bill in Parliament to give effect to its conclusions. See *infra*, pp. 171-172.

to be on the verge of war. Campbell-Bannerman for once abandoned his habitual caution, and in a speech at Norwich on October 25 gave the Government an unqualified support, declaring it impossible that the incident could have been an accident. The most pacific of Liberals and Radicals were caught up in the general emotion and rapidly followed his example, leaving Mr. Stead and one or two other solitary journalists to plead that the hypothesis of accident must at least be entertained before the Government proceeded to action. Naval opinion fortunately was on the same side, and before the end of the week the Government consented to refer the question to a special Court appointed under the Hague Tribunal, which in the following year acquitted the Russians of any deliberate malice while holding them liable for compensation.[1] A few of his friends who regarded this incident with real alarm took upon themselves to remonstrate with Campbell-Bannerman, and endeavoured to persuade him that it was the duty of an Opposition leader to appeal for at least a suspension of judgment until the facts were known. He was deaf to these remonstrances, and for the time being could think of nothing but the reckless cruelty which he supposed to have been practised upon the fishermen.

VI

He had meanwhile been greatly saddened by the news which reached him while he was still at Marienbad of Sir William Harcourt's death (Oct. 1), and he seized the first opportunity on his return of paying a public tribute to his memory :—

[1] The International Commission appointed to investigate this incident consisted of Vice-Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont (Great Britain), Admiral Kaznakoff (Russia), Rear-Admiral Fourrier (France), and Rear-Admiral Davis (America). Its report, issued on Feb. 25, acquitted the Russians of any malicious intention and attributed the firing to error, a majority holding that since there were in fact no torpedo boats among the trawlers it was not justifiable. The Commissioners acknowledged that Admiral Rozddestwensky had personally done all he could to prevent the trawlers, when recognised as such, from being the objects of his squadron's fire, but the majority held that when passing the Straits of Dover he ought to have warned the authorities that they needed assistance.

CHAP. XXV. 1904. It is a melancholy duty incumbent upon me amid the enthusiasm and exhilaration which evidently and with good cause prevail in this assemblage—it is my melancholy duty to strike a note of sadness at the outset of my observations to you. But I could not address a company of fellow-Liberals for the first time after the death of Sir William Harcourt without giving expression, however imperfectly, to my feelings regarding him, and to my sense of the loss which his departure from amongst us entails. Sir William Harcourt was undoubtedly, since the passing away of Mr. Gladstone, the foremost figure in our national public life. He was the greatest 'Parliament man,' if I may revive the use of an old phrase. His great natural gifts, his experience of men and things, the wide range of his knowledge of past events and present affairs, gave him this prominent position. In my public life there have been three men who have stood on a plane altogether and distinctly above all their contemporaries in political life. They were Gladstone, Disraeli, and Harcourt. Is it not a striking thing, but is it not at the same time a gratifying thing, that this political athlete, this protagonist in the political arena, always fighting, always being fought, yet did in his later days attract to himself not only the admiration, which we need not be surprised at, but the regard and even the personal affection of his stoutest opponents, and that his death when it came was met with expressions of sincere and genuine regret from all classes and parties and conditions of men amongst us? Sir William Harcourt was a hard hitter. He spared no man. He sometimes did not even spare his own friends. He never minced his words. He had strong, uncompromising, and often unpopular opinions; he was loud in the proclamation of them; but those who differed from him most recognised his high courage, his candour, his generous temperament, and his warmth of heart which won from all of them the warmest appreciation. Such a man was a tower of strength to our party on account of those qualities to which I have referred; but far greater than these was the service he rendered to us by his staunchness in political principle. He was a devoted lover and servant of his country, thoroughly imbued with the old spirit of constitutional liberty—the spirit which has made our country what it is—and he could always be depended upon to resist any departure from the great main principles of Liberalism. Let us hope that although we have lost him from among us, him who was our friend and our comrade, with his vigorous and tenacious hold of sound doctrine, yet there will not lack among us a supply of men

who will follow his high example and emulate his courage and fidelity.[1]—(Norwich, Oct. 26.)

Campbell-Bannerman had stood aloof from most of the conflicts within the Liberal Party over the claims and personality of this eminent man. When the succession was decided in 1894, he was neither Roseberian nor Harcourtian, and was willing to serve under either leader. When Sir William retired in 1898, he expressed himself freely about the reflections which he considered to have been thrown upon the other Liberal front benchers in the Harcourt-Morley correspondence,[2] and he had at that time little sympathy with the causes which the two resigning leaders assigned for their discontent. But he warmly welcomed Sir William's return to active politics and, though he felt unable to invite him back into the council of the party, he was sincerely grateful to him for the powerful aid which he gave him during the difficult years that followed. Sir William was no fair-weather friend, and he ranged himself without flinching by Campbell-Bannerman's side during the period of his greatest unpopularity. The latter prided himself on his management of his formidable predecessor. 'Never to let yourself be rattled by Harcourt' was, he used to say, the first rule for a Liberal front bencher. Start with that and you would find him a loyal and warm-hearted friend who never failed you at a difficult moment. He had a humorous way of dealing with the tornadoes which sometimes blew from the New Forest; and though he prudently warned his friends to sheer off when they were coming, he himself found these 'strong gales from the south-west' rather bracing than otherwise. He had nicknames derived from their places of abode for most of his principal colleagues, and Harcourt was 'Malwood,' 'Malwoodiana,' 'The Nymph of Malwood.' The 'Nymph,' he reports on one occasion, has placed him in an awkward fix with 'Barnbougle' (Rosebery). 'How happy I could be

[1] See also House of Commons debate on the Address, Feb. 14, 1905.
[2] See *supra*, vol. i. ch. xii.

CHAP. XXV. 1904. with either if t'other fair charmer were away.' 'Harcourt's kindness to me has been immense,' he writes to the Chief Whip. '*Felix opportunitate* except that he had so little of Nuneham.'

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There may have been little ammunition, as Campbell-Bannerman said, but speech-making was incessant and voluminous during the autumn and winter, and he himself filled many columns of the newspapers during October, November, and December. 'It is no part of a Free Trader's duty,' he said at Norwich (Oct. 26), 'to take part in the game of hunting the fiscal slipper,' but the fascination of that pursuit was irresistible, and no one took more pleasure in it than himself. Speaking at Edinburgh (Nov. 5), he analysed the strange proceedings of the National Union of Conservative Associations at Southampton (Oct. 27 and 28), when the assembled Conservatives paid compliments to Mr. Balfour and passed a resolution proposed by Mr. Chaplin; and in a notable passage gave the Liberal answer to those who 'when in doubt played the Empire':—

> We say that, as a Free Trade country, we have nothing richer or better to give them than the open door which we offer them; that, if reciprocity is desirable, it is for the Colonies to reciprocate by giving greater facilities on their part—as Canada so generously and, I would even say, so affectionately has done—by giving us those greater facilities for British products. But we would neither press it on them, nor for a moment would we think of making it a ground of complaint that our exports are taxed while we admit their produce free. I believe that this is understood and appreciated in the Colonies, and that they neither expect nor desire that we should subvert our fiscal system, imperil our trade with foreign nations, and burden our people with food taxation, in order to assimilate our revenue system to theirs.

On December 20 he followed Mr. Chamberlain at Limehouse, and in a speech compact with closely reasoned detail examined the effects of Protection upon the labour and life of the people of London—the docker, the shopkeeper, the clerk. This speech was full of the hard hitting which

delights the partisan, and he gave Mr. Chamberlain a Roland for the many Olivers which he had received—his friends thought—too submissively :— CHAP. XXV. ÆT. 67-68.

The missionary of Empire shows the chameleon-like variations of his policy as he goes along. The echo of a famous passage at Greenock still rings in our ears—the passage, I mean, about the perilous condition of our trades. But now it is his own industry that is going. His stock-in-trade has gone, his figures and statistics have gone, the Tariff Commission is threatened, the fustian trade will go. One by one his arguments have been led out to slaughter. Can we expect him, then, to take it lying down? Can it be wondered at that there is now and again a little failing in the matter of temper?

From these sallies he returned again and again to his cardinal point that Protection was anti-Liberal, anti-social, and undemocratic :—

Liberals in this matter are not fighting a single proposal, but a whole spirit and tone of policy and administration and legislation. The fiscal proposals are saturated, as the whole policy of the present Government has been found to be, with restriction as against freedom, with inequality between trade and trade, with injustice towards the community of consumers, with privilege and monopoly, with jealousy and unfriendliness towards other countries.

The year ended well for the Liberal Party. The flowing tide, as gauged by by-elections, was running strongly in the constituencies, the leaders were a band of brothers, their only anxiety was the nimbleness of their opponent and his uncanny capacity for surviving wounds and casualties which must have been fatal to any other man or party. From all his excursions Campbell-Bannerman brought back good reports. 'Things looking well at Manchester,' he tells the Chief Whip, 'but doubts expressed whether our friend Winston, with all the cleverness and variety of his speeches, is quite the sort of man to capture the quiet non-party voter who went for Houldsworth because of his solidity and stolidity and eminent respectability.' These

CHAP. XXV. 1904.

doubts, as the event proved, were unfounded. In Manchester, as elsewhere, the Unionist tide was fast running out, and though Mr. Balfour professed to believe that the success of his party was as certain as the laws of nature, there were not many at the end of 1904 to share this opinion.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST VICISSITUDES

Hunting the Fiscal Slipper—The Irish Question again—Mr. Balfour's 'Walking-out' Policy—The Hall of Mystery—The Survival of the Government—The 'Two Elections' Dispute—A Scene in the House—The Aliens Bill—The Redistribution Resolutions—A Catastrophe for the Government—Defeated but Surviving—At Marienbad—A Talk with King Edward—In the Royal Circle—A Medical Prescription—Lord Spencer's Illness—Return to London—The Irish Question again—The Stirling Speech—The Retort from Bodmin—A Definite Separation.

CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN addressed his constituents at Stirling on January 16, and, true to his own principle of setting up a constructive policy against Mr. Chamberlain's Tariff scheme, devoted himself largely to social questions, entering a powerful plea for land reform and the rational treatment of unemployment. But 'hunting the fiscal slipper' continued, in spite of these efforts, to be the absorbing occupation of politicians, and its whereabouts seemed more than ever mysterious in the first months of this year. Mr. Morley offered a reward to any of his constituents who could write down the Prime Minister's views on a 'sheet of notepaper,' whereupon the Prime Minister himself triumphantly produced a 'half-sheet,' containing a statement which he declared to be 'concise and lucid.' The half-sheet contained no word which would enable a reader to say whether Mr. Balfour considered Mr. Chamberlain's policy wise or unwise, but appeared to pass that burning question to a Colonial Conference, which was to be 'unhampered by limiting restrictions.' This Conference was not to meet until after the General Election, and whether, if it decided in favour of

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. Mr. Chamberlain's policy, Parliament was to be at liberty to go forward with it without another election was an unsettled question between the different groups of the Unionist Party. As was observed at the time, the half-sheet provided ' a hedge within the hedge,' and a Balfourian was now at liberty to tell his constituents that the Chamberlain policy was impossible until after two elections.

All through January and the first half of February this controversy raged unceasingly on the platform, but Campbell-Bannerman reserved himself till Parliament met on Feb. 14. Then in the debate on the Address he traced the conduct of the Government through all its shifts and turns, and hotly challenged its right to remain in office in face of the popular disapproval expressed in the by-elections. But though his constitutional position might be impeached, Mr. Balfour's parliamentary stronghold was still impregnable, and on Mr. Asquith's amendment to the Address the Government majority was 63—considerably better than the worst of the previous year. Hopes of the Free Trade Unionists were waning : only three of them had voted with the Opposition on this amendment and a few more had walked out. Mr. Chamberlain meanwhile was unceasing in his efforts to force the Balfourians into his camp, and at a meeting of the Tariff Reform League (March 3), he openly attributed the misfortunes of the party at by-elections to the half-heartedness of the candidates. Those misfortunes were unabated. In a few weeks the Government lost seats at Stalybridge and North Westmorland; and the new Scottish Solicitor-General, appointed on Mr. Graham Murray's elevation to the Bench failed to obtain election in Buteshire.

The troubles in the Government were increased by the resignation of Mr. Wyndham as Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the revelation which accompanied it of serious differences on Irish policy among Unionist Ministers. The incident was decisive as to the possibility of a conciliatory Irish policy in Unionist hands. The die-hards, led by Sir Edward Carson, would have none of it, and were merciless in their attacks both upon Mr. Wyndham and upon Sir

Anthony MacDonnell, a distinguished Irishman and Indian civilian, who had been appointed for the special purpose of exploring its possibilities. Campbell-Bannerman knew these people and commented grimly on the fading vision of a Unionist half-way house in Ireland. But troubles on the Irish question were by no means confined to the Unionist side, and he felt himself sharply challenged when Lord Rosebery said at a dinner of the City Liberal Club (March 9) that it was 'not possible for any Government, however potent it might deem itself, to bring in any measure to establish a Parliament, however subordinate, in Dublin without first having made it a matter for special appeal to the country.' Here were the seeds of the controversy which before the close of this year were to make the final breach between him and Lord Rosebery.

In the meantime, the Opposition renewed their efforts to elucidate the Prime Minister's mind on the fiscal question. Resolutions so framed that it seemed totally impossible that he could avoid giving a simple answer to the question whether he was or was not in favour of Mr. Chamberlain's policy were now drawn up and set down for various dates. On the first of these (March 8) Mr. Balfour moved the previous question; on the second (March 22) he announced his intention of ignoring both debate and division, and advised his followers to do the same. When the division was called, he accordingly walked out with all his supporters, leaving the resolution to be carried by 254 to 2. Three further resolutions affirming the full doctrine of Free Trade were now carried (March 28, March 29, and April 4) *nemine contradicente* in a House supposed to be commanded by the Unionist Party. Campbell-Bannerman commented caustically on these proceedings in the debate of March 22:—

The House of Commons has been treated as if it were a sort of 'Hall of Mystery.' We have not had debates, but something more like séances. The moment the fiscal question came on the lights were turned down, we heard the crack of the whip, but we saw very little, and the question was, so far as we could judge, which particular wing of the party opposite would hypnotise the

CHAP. XXVI. other. But we cannot deal with the matter in this bantering, facetious strain; it is too serious. . . .

1905. We have passed through three stages of this fiscal question in the parliamentary world. The first stage was when we were told that there was to be a grand inquiry, that until that inquiry was completed our duty was to hold our tongues. Discussion was suppressed. That was the stage of what I would call the closed door. Then we came to a further stage when discussion was reluctantly admitted, but on the condition that on no account should it come to a decisive or clear test, that on no account should there be a conclusion arrived at. Non-committal discussion was to be allowed, some sort of amendment was to be moved which would neutralise the effect of the whole discussion. Something in the meanwhile was being submitted to the country as a collective policy, which we have had great difficulty in understanding. The treasure was hidden in earthen vessels which were deposited in various parts of the island. There was a pamphlet in Downing Street; there was a speech at Sheffield; then there was another speech at Edinburgh; there was a narrow escape of a third speech at Southampton which the Russian fleet prevented.[1] And that, I think, we may call the stage of the previous question. But now we have come to a further stage. Those were the stages of the shut door and of the side door. We are now at the stage of the back door. Now all restraint has been removed, perfect freedom prevails on the other side of the House, not only of discussion and decision, but of presence or absence. Those who have exhausted every wile of concealment, every trench that could be dug, every finesse, every trick by which a little advantage in defence might be obtained, strike their camp, abandon their policy and their pretences, and leave their bewildered followers to take part in a general *sauve-qui-peut*. I observe that most of the tariff reformers are away. We are inclined to rub our eyes. Is not this Nelson's year? Where are the sons of Empire? I should have expected that they would have come here either to bury Cæsar or to praise him. There is one, indeed, I observe, who is faithful, ever faithful, the hon. member for Central Sheffield,[2] who is the real patentee of these fiscal theories. We cannot but drop a tear over the absence of the others. . . .

[1] At the Southampton meeting of the National Union of Conservative Associations (Oct. 28, 1894), Mr. Balfour spoke about the Dogger Bank incident, when he had been expected to speak on the fiscal question.

[2] Sir Howard Vincent.

Are we then to understand that the Government have absolutely renounced all policy of their own? They have ceased to attempt to control the votes of their followers. They dare not impose their will upon them, as is shown to-night. And yet this is the policy for which the Government was reconstructed—not the latest reconstruction, but an important reconstruction which still leaves its traces amongst them—and, although they may belittle the policy that is at stake to-night, they cannot surely repudiate their own policy. It is a poor thing, but their own. I say that, on the eve of a general election, coming nearer to us as the days go on and as events occur, the Government are found not to be able to face a decision of the House of Commons. That is the plain English of the tactics of to-night. It is not even the previous question that is moved. I say let them take, late as it is, the only course that is open to men of courage, honesty, and honour. Let them get rid of this House of Commons which they can no longer control or trust, and let them appeal to the country and see what the country will say.

Probably nothing did Mr. Balfour more harm in the country than these attempts to evade the issue by 'walking out.' The great Tory stronghold of Brighton, where Mr. Gerald Loder had offered himself for re-election on his appointment as Junior Whip, replied by converting his majority of 2500 into a majority of 817 for his Free Trade opponent. More than ever the man in the street concluded that the Government was clinging to office when the country was sick of it, and judged it to be 'not cricket' that the Prime Minister should retire to the pavilion when the bowling became too hot.

II

The shadow of dissolution lay over the House, and on both sides members trimmed their sails to the prevailing breezes. Tory members voted for a Trades Disputes Bill which they hated, and then in a sudden repentance killed it in Grand Committee. Liberal members found reasons for not opposing the Aliens Bill, and even for permitting the 'doles to landlords and clergy' to be prolonged. The Government, shaken by its Irish quarrel and constantly weakened by the differences of its members on Army

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. questions, seemed every day to be at its last gasp, but still miraculously survived; and Mr. Balfour defiantly set up the doctrine that he was entitled to prolong its existence in the teeth of public disfavour so long as he had a parliamentary majority of any kind. One Minister even went to the length of declaring it to be 'altogether unconstitutional' that a Prime Minister should dissolve Parliament, unless defeated, short of the conventional six-year term for a septennial Parliament.[1] On May 23 pent-up passions broke in a scene of extraordinary disorder. Hard pressed by his opponents to say how the pledge he had given in his Edinburgh speech (Oct. 3, 1904), that 'it would be neither possible nor right for the Government to adopt any system of fiscal reform unless it had first been submitted to the country,' was to be adjusted to his new policy of Conference—whether, in fact, there were to be two elections, one to authorise the Conference and a second to authorise the food taxes, if the Conference proposed them—Mr. Balfour made the disconcerting reply that what he said at Edinburgh might be regarded as a pledge by his supporters, but not by his opponents.[2] It was open to him at any time to tell the Opposition that he had changed his mind, if his supporters approved. The Opposition were incensed beyond bounds by the Prime Minister's theory that a pledge which seemed to be given to the country was in fact only given to his own party, and could be rendered null and void at his or their discretion. That, in Mr. Balfour's own phrase, seemed to be asking of human nature more than human nature is capable of giving.

Campbell-Bannerman was on his feet in a moment with a motion for adjournment which, being supported by the requisite forty members, was taken at the evening sitting. Then in a careful speech reciting all stages of the question from the Edinburgh speech onwards, he put a series of pointed questions addressed directly to Mr. Balfour. When he sat

[1] Mr. Gerald Balfour.—Leeds, April 7, 1905.

[2] 'I cannot see how the announcement of a policy on this side of the House can be regarded as a pledge to the other side of the House.'

down, it was naturally expected that Mr. Balfour would rise at once to reply to them, but instead the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, presented himself at the table. At that the whole Opposition rushed to the conclusion that another evasion was to be practised, and Mr. Lyttelton's voice was drowned in an angry clamour which persisted in spite of the efforts of the Deputy-Chairman (Mr. Lowther) to obtain a hearing for him. Finally, failing to restore order, Mr. Lowther suspended the sitting. It was a painful and violent scene of a kind which was very little to Campbell-Bannerman's liking. Again and again in the course of his leadership he had put his veto upon hotheads planning to make scenes in the House of Commons. But on this occasion it was noticed that he made no efforts to restrain his followers, and for once the whole party, including the coolest veterans, were swept away by a common impulse.

It was, of course, indefensible, and Campbell-Bannerman was solemnly lectured by the Unionist press, which found in this incident one more proof of his incapacity to hold the highest office. Mr. Chamberlain meanwhile took advantage of the occasion to welcome the 'clear lead' which Mr. Balfour had given to the Unionist Party, and to claim that he had said that 'Tariff Reform would be the most important part of Unionist policy,' that 'Colonial Preference would be the most important part of Tariff Reform,' and 'therefore' that 'Colonial Preference would be the first item in the future Unionist programme.' In a debate which followed in the House of Lords, Lord Spencer contributed the *mot juste* when he said that it remained in doubt whether Mr. Chamberlain was 'the opponent, the rival, or the ally of the Prime Minister.' In the Commons Campbell-Bannerman himself made a final effort to elucidate the situation on the motion for adjournment before the Whitsuntide recess, but only succeeded in making it more evident that in the position in which he was the Prime Minister could not say which of these rôles he adopted without shattering his party. Once more he found safety

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. in protesting it to be unreasonable to ask him to express his views about any solution of the Preference question until a Conference had reported. This afforded the Unionist Free Traders a brief pretext for not withdrawing their support, and it was clear by Whitsuntide that the Government could not be displaced by any adverse division in the House of Commons.

'We are at the same old game here,' he writes to Mr. Robertson in the last week of June, 'the Government very "clever" and tricky, their men cast down and shamefaced, and privately condemning them: but the party vote keeping steady. Joe and his agitation seem to be dying down, and that fact helps A. J. B. No one either knows or can conjecture what will happen. Our people keep full of spirit and energy, but this long delay is precious hard upon candidates whose money is running out all the time.' In another letter he reports the Prime Minister as having said of himself, 'I am like a man with a chronic cold who knows that the slightest fresh chill will kill him.' When Parliament reassembled after Whitsuntide, the Government suffered further discredit from the Report of Sir William Butler's Committee on Sales and Refunds after the war to contractors in South Africa. Debate on this matter was long and acrimonious, and Ministers blundered in resisting the evident sense of the House, which finally compelled them to appoint a Statutory Royal Commission in place of the Parliamentary Committee which they at first offered. Campbell-Bannerman meantime rallied his party against the Aliens Bill, to which not a few of them had assented under the shadow of an impending election, and brought a substantial minority into the lobby against the third reading, mainly on the ground that the Bill was illiberal and unfair and discriminated unjustly between rich and poor. One passage from his speech on this occasion may be recorded :—

The Bill is one which makes a distinction between the poor and the rich, or rather between the destitute and those who have a little money to produce when they come here. I cannot

imagine anything less in accordance with the general spirit and characteristic of our countrymen than that that should be the particular ground upon which a man is to be excluded. The hardest working-man, the most laborious and intelligent man, the man the most likely to make a good citizen if he settles here, and to do his duty by those belonging to him and those who live around him, has no chance to come into this country unless he has money in his pocket. But the worthless man, the scamp, the lazy man, the man who is not likely to add either to the prosperity of other people or his own, can come in if he has money in his pocket. That is a plain statement of the fact, and it is quite enough to condemn this Bill. . . . The Bill will, of course, become law; that has been evident from the first. The one thing that reconciles us to it is that it will do, after all, but little harm. The very absurdity of many of its provisions and the unworkable nature of the machinery will defeat to a large extent the purpose of those who have been anxious to see it passed into law. We have not yet been made quite sure whether it is intended to be the first step in a long process of active protection. It has been claimed on that ground—it has been claimed on that ground by the hon. member for West Birmingham—claimed by him as the first step in the glorious progress towards the shutting out, not only of the foreigner but of his goods. . . . I can only express my regret that the session has been mainly devoted to such a Bill, for this is the great work of the session for which we have to curtail the opportunities of considering supply, and for which we have to sacrifice other much more useful measures. I regret that the great work of the session has been one of such a character as not only to be likely to be of little use for the purpose for which it was intended, but also to impose on this country a new character in the eyes of the world, a character which our fathers before us were always most anxious and careful to avoid.—(July 19, 1905.)

As a good Scottish member, Campbell-Bannerman sat patiently through the debates on the Scottish Churches Bill, introduced to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the dispute between the Free and United Free Churches. This he supported with the exception of Clause V.,[1] which gave the General Assembly, with the consent of the majority of the Presbyteries, the

[1] House of Commons, July 18.

CHAP. XXVI. 1905.

power to prescribe the formula of subscription to the Confession of Faith required from ministers and professors of theology in the Scottish universities. This he described as an 'undesirable alien,' therein taking the view of English Nonconformists, who objected to an ecclesiastical assembly enjoying the right of determining the faith of an established Church. The clause was hotly debated through the remaining stages of the Bill, and Mr. Bryce made a gallant effort to rescue the professorships from what he regarded as an undesirable imposition of tests, but in the end it was carried with the rest of the Bill, and, as English Churchmen were careful to point out, an important precedent was set for the release of established Churches from State control in matters of faith and doctrine.

If this was comparatively smooth water, the rest of the session was disastrous for the Government. The Unionist Party was clamouring for the promised Redistribution Bill, which they relied upon to mitigate their coming defeat by cutting down the Irish representation in the House of Commons and increasing the representation of England in the same proportion. The Government had shown no zeal in this cause, and it was not until July 11 that they responded to the pressure on them by producing a series of resolutions and proposing the appointment of a Boundary Commission to give effect to them. A vital question immediately arose. Could these resolutions be treated as one and debated and disposed of *en bloc* or must they be divided and debated separately? In the first case there was just a possibility of forcing them through before the session ended; in the second their plight was evidently hopeless. The Irish considered it to be adding insult to injury that they should not only be denied Home Rule but be shorn of the representation in the House of Commons which they considered to be solemnly pledged to them under the Act of Union. The whole of the Opposition were of the same opinion, and it was certain that they would join hands with the Irish in using all the forces of the House to obstruct and defeat such a proposal. Upon this subject Campbell-

Bannerman had no doubts: he had yielded enough on the Irish question, but here he was determined to take his stand. The Government had evidently relied on getting their resolutions *en bloc*, but, as soon appeared, they had reckoned without the Speaker. Mr. John Redmond put the question to Mr. Lowther, who took time to consider it, and then in his first considered judgment (July 17) on a matter of high importance announced that in his view the one resolution must be divided into eight or nine parts, each of which should be discussed separately in Committee of the whole House. This was the end of Redistribution for the current Parliament and a crushing blow to the Government. Delighted cheers from Liberal and Irish benches greeted this announcement, and nothing was left to Mr. Balfour but to intimate that the Government would withdraw the resolution and proceed by Bill, but 'not in the present session.' Evidently that kind of Redistribution was dead.

The Prime Minister—another sure sign of extremity—summoned a party meeting for the following day, and endeavoured to console his followers by representing the Speaker's ruling as a blessing in disguise, and promising to appoint a Boundary Committee in the autumn, which would start work on the basis of the resolutions. This, as his audience knew, was a formal flourish. The question before the meeting was whether he should carry on or go out, and once more the decision was for carrying on. Unionist members came away with solemn faces over grave revelations said to have been made about the state of foreign affairs. It was imperative, they said, that Mr. Balfour should remain at the helm in these anxious times. Duty forbade the terrible experiment of replacing him with 'C.-B.'; common prudence said anything better than braving the constituencies in this weather. Pious resolutions were passed promising loyal support to the Prime Minister in what remained of the session.

Yet two days later (July 20) the Government was actually defeated on a vote for the Irish Land Commission in

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. Committee of Supply, and old parliamentary hands judged that the end had at length come. But once more they were mistaken. The Prime Minister announced that he 'would take time' to consider the position, and having taken three days announced that he intended neither to resign nor dissolve. Precedents were abundant: Government had often been defeated and gone on, there was nothing abnormal or disconcerting in what had taken place. Campbell-Bannerman was quick with the obvious retorts, and Sir Edward Grey said that there could no longer be that mutual respect which ought to exist between the House of Commons and its leader, but Mr. Balfour persuaded his party and once more he held on. The session petered out in minor measures, but at the end of it Mr. Balfour had again achieved the impossible. He was still there, and, except the Septennial Act, there seemed to be no limit to his survival.

III

Campbell-Bannerman betook himself to Dover at the beginning of August, and after a week at the Lord Warden Hotel proceeded with his wife by the usual stages to Marienbad, which he reached on the 14th. He was thoroughly exhausted, and his doctor enjoined a complete rest for at least two months. But Marienbad this year proved to be no rustic retreat for a politician lying fallow. King Edward was there doing the cure, and now for the first time Campbell-Bannerman found himself brought intimately within his circle. 'I lunched with the King yesterday,' he writes on the 22nd, 'but had no personal or public talk with him, except that he took me out on the balcony to tell me about Curzon and Minto. He ended, however, by saying he hoped I would come to him one day because he wished to have a talk with me: and when we were coming away, he repeated this in the hearing of some other guests, which surprised me. He has been extremely friendly in his manner whenever we have met, and seems in good spirits.' The talk took place two days later. 'I went by appointment,' he writes to

Mr. Gladstone, 'and this special interview lasted nearly an hour. He said he was glad to exchange views with me, as I must soon be in office and very high office: and he proceeded to deal with the whole gamut, foreign and home, from the Kaiser to College Green. I cannot commit much that he said to the chances of the post, but (making allowances) it was most satisfactory, quite reasonable, even when there were divergencies. He was evidently pleased, the talking nearly all on his side, and the significance of his attitude was unmistakable. In all this, however, so "correct" was he that not a word was said or hint given about the position of parties, about dissolution, etc. Freely criticised Departments, but nothing about Government as a whole.' Another account to Captain Sinclair adds a personal touch:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Capt. Sinclair

MARIENBAD, *Aug.* 26, '04.—Everything prospering so far: weather now broken, but we hope only temporarily. Chief interest of course centring round H.M., who is very well, in high spirits, and enthusiastic about the place.

I have seen a great deal of him and found him most friendly; I avoid him mostly on the promenade, but met him at dinner and supper, and he asked me ten days ago to come and see him and have a talk, when he expressed his satisfaction at having the chance of a frank conversation on things abroad and at home, as I must soon be in office and in very high office. Thereupon he discoursed with the greatest fullness on the state of Europe (Germany and France and ourselves; very apprehensive, to put it mildly), Japan and Russia (not the new treaty): India, Army; and, among other domestic things, Ireland.

All most satisfactory and reasonable. He properly said nothing of the Government as a whole, or of dissolution, but free in denouncing much that they do. At the end, sent messages to my wife and said he was glad to meet and talk to such 'old friends.'

Most significant, and very discreetly done. Quite scared and saddened me.

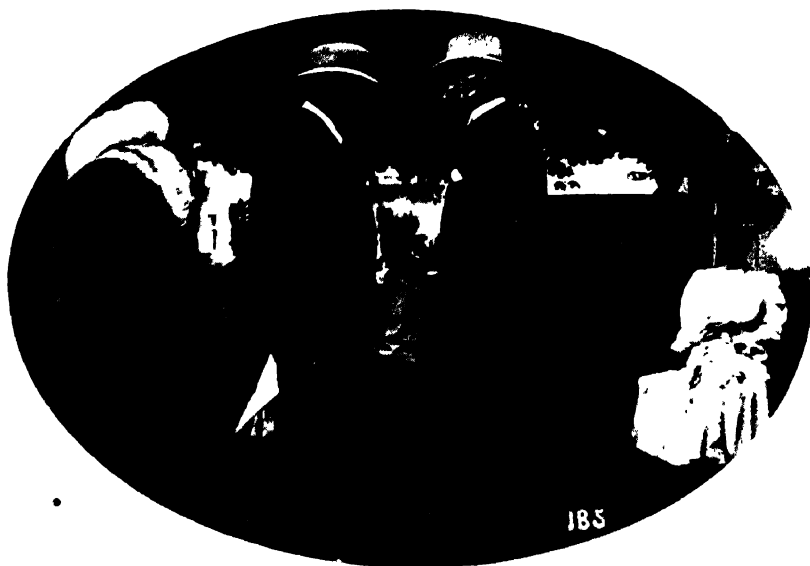
Of course this is secretissimo.

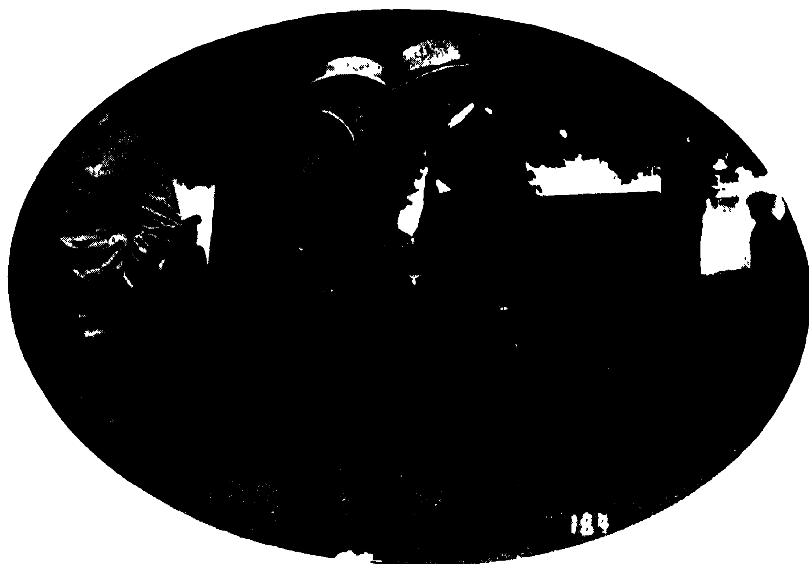
Jack Fisher came over one day from Karlsbad. We mean

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. (the doctors all advising) to take as long a clear holiday as we can. I am doing a regular Kreuzbrunn cure with massage, etc. We don't intend to gaze at Britannia much before the very end of October.

'It quite scared and saddened me.' It is doubtful if to this moment he had ever fully faced the fact that the mantle was to fall on him. His correspondence may be searched in vain for any of the flattering anticipations in which the great and ambitious commonly indulge. Scrupulously and faithfully, even in his own thoughts, he had observed the limiting condition impressed upon him when he succeeded Sir William Harcourt that the leadership in the House of Commons did not carry with it, as of right, the succession to the Prime Ministership. Again and again, as I have already recorded, he joined with the utmost simplicity in the discussion of plans which would have eliminated him for the conciliation of Unionist Free Traders and other fastidious people who thought him an 'incubus'; and even in the last months of 1905 it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be persuaded to talk even to his intimates of what was plainly an imminent event which in common prudence ought to be provided for. The whole record shows his stubborn determination not to be driven or jockeyed out of what he considered to be his lawful place, but beyond this he advanced no claims and encouraged no speculation. He had spoken honestly when he told his Scottish friends at Dunfermline that he was 'a politician without ambition.'

With his sure instinct for the political forces at work, King Edward had no doubt who was to be his next First Minister, and he wisely seized the opportunity to improve acquaintance with him. It may be inferred that the opening conversation was a success on both sides. During the next fortnight Campbell-Bannerman reports himself caught up in a round of unceasing parties: 'About half my meals have been taken in H.M.'s company.' The liking was mutual, as the crowd of smart folk who assisted at the royal cure quickly observed and reported home.





SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN IN CONVERSATION WITH HIS MAJESTY KING EDWARD VII. AT MARIENBAD, 1906

p. 176

'H.M.' he says, 'has been uniformly and openly friendly beyond anything one could expect. I think my countrymen (and women much more) were astounded to find with what confidence, consideration, and intimacy he treated me. That this was done on purpose I do not doubt.' But the courtly life had its drawbacks for an invalid strictly enjoined to take a complete rest and observe a careful diet: 'Dinner,' he reports, 'begins at 7.30, eating plain food, but far too much, a mixture of Court restraint and jollity; then while the dismal mysteries of bridge are being performed sitting making difficult conversation with one's fellow non-players, and at 10 getting home to bed.' At the end of it, Dr. Ott sent him to bed for forty-eight hours and insisted that he 'should stay abroad and unoccupied till near the end of October.' This was the kind of prescription that he most liked, and he cheerfully put away from himself all thoughts of political troubles at home and the part which might await him when he returned. 'I have repented of my lavish promises of meetings in the autumn,' he writes to the Chief Whip on September 9, 'and should like to hold them over for a bit.' A fortnight later he sends a long list of engagements cancelled or refused, probably to the consternation of Mr. Gladstone. But he reports himself 'ten years younger than when he came,' and for once he is able to say that his wife is making distinct progress. Hints from home that events might move faster than he expected left him undisturbed. Viewed from Marienbad, they seemed, as usual, to be 'moving very quietly,' and the idea that A. J. B. would do anything unexpected or inconsiderate during the prescribed two months seems never to have crossed his mind. Some one tells him that there is to be a Cabinet early in October, but he doesn't believe it. 'The truth is, they are fallen into the pit that themselves have digged, and having proclaimed the impossibility of resignation, they have to go deeper and deeper into the rising tide.' He makes suitable apology for the mixed metaphor, but the news of the Elgin by-election had just come in and that caused a ripple even at

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. Marienbad. His mind was made up that there would be neither resignation nor dissolution this year.

To his Stirling chairman he wrote on September 11 :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. J. B. Smith

MARIENBAD, *Sept.* 11, '05.—I have not heard anything of you for some time, beyond noticing that you have been, as usual, catching trout in Loch Leven. I should hope you and Mrs. Smith are away somewhere holiday-making and enjoying yourselves, but I drop this line to say what my intentions for the autumn are.

I was greatly run down at the end of the year, which I attributed quite as much to a heavy tale of meetings in the autumn as to the Session itself. They said there was nothing wrong but fatigue, and ordered me a long and complete rest. I therefore mean to stay abroad (somewhere or other) all through this month and next; and when I come back I will take fewer meetings. Things are at such a pitch now that I doubt if they are much needed: Elgin shows the drift as well as anything we have had. Among the first places, probably the very first, I come to will be Stirling.

Of course a change of mind of the Govt. as to their position would alter all this arrangement.

The King is gone and we have some peace. I saw a great deal of him and was treated with the utmost friendliness and confidence: this was done openly and frankly, and I as well as every one saw in it a desire to show that he would be on very good terms with a Liberal Government. But though he discussed public questions with me with the utmost frankness, he never even referred to the actual political position and the question of dissolution, etc., etc. So that he was perfectly loyal to his Ministers.

His presence and the disturbance it creates do not go well with a serious cure of waters such as I have been taking.

But we have now a little time for recovery. My wife is still disabled from free walking and feels greatly her disability, but she is better generally, and is under the immediate treatment of our Austrian doctor, who promises sure if slow improvement.

We have heavenly weather here, but I hear of wind and rain in Scotland. There does not appear to be much exciting people at home, even the Wee Free business has almost passed out of sight. The man we owe most to of all is Elgin.[1]

[1] Lord Elgin had taken a leading part in the settlement of the Church dispute.

From Marienbad he went to Meran, where the news reached him of Lord Spencer's serious illness. 'A terrible calamity falling on us; even if it is only partial and temporary, it must affect the future . . . a great disaster to the party, apart from the concern and anxiety one feels on his account.' From the days when he had served with him as Chief Secretary his admiration and respect for Lord Spencer had been unbounded, and he never lost the habit of looking up to him as his chief and superior. Of 'Spec,' as he habitually called him, he spoke always with the warmest affection, and it was no mock modesty which made him shrink from the suggestion that he could be advanced above 'Spec' or be placed in any position which made him a rival to 'Spec's' claims. That 'Spec' was the soundest of sound Liberals, that nature had given him an instinctive apprehension of what Liberalism was and meant, that he was fearless and loyal and chivalrous, and the best of friends in bad times, was the testimony which time after time he gave with a full heart to his old chief. Campbell-Bannerman was not naturally a hero-worshipper, and no one had a shrewder, if always charitable and humorous, appreciation of the frailties of public men, but in his admiration of Lord Spencer his reserves melted and he saw no flaw.

This news threw a shadow over his holiday, and we find him anxiously consulting his doctor as to the interpretation of the few details which came to him from England and the possibility of his friend's recovery. From Meran he went on to Vienna. Thence to Paris at the beginning of November. On the 12th he was back in London and reports himself 'available to see pundits, penitents, anxious inquirers, or catechumens.'

IV

To this list must be added anxious colleagues who found themselves in one of their periodic difficulties on the Irish question. That alone seemed to cast a shadow on the otherwise unclouded brilliance of Liberal prospects.

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. 'I am not afraid of the Irish question, being honest about it,' he had written to Captain Sinclair on his way home (Oct. 26). 'But of course, if you move in the smartest circles, golfing and bridging, you must make it clear that, though you retain your eccentric and unfortunate taste for pitch, you are not going to defile your hands with it.' Unfortunately not only the smart circles but some of the shrewdest of Liberal Party tacticians were in a state of alarm about the Irish 'pitch.' There was no doubt that the Irish were at the lowest ebb of unpopularity with the British people. They had taken a violent line against the Boer War; they had offended the Nonconformists by giving the Government a steady support on the Education question. Electioneerers reported that the desired unity of Free Traders was still threatened by doubts whether a victory won on that issue might not be used for the passing of Home Rule. What should be said, or should anything at all be said, to allay these fears?

About the answer to this question there was the old cross-current. Mr. Morley was for nailing the green flag to the mast-head; Sir Edward Grey had said that he was in favour of going on with the sympathetic policy where the Government had dropped it, and had spoken,[1] rather rashly as it seemed at the time, of the Liberal Party declining office unless it had a majority clear of the Irish; Lord Rosebery, in a speech at Stourbridge,[2] had called upon Liberals to 'say clearly and definitely what they meant with regard to Ireland,' and declared 'the policy of placing Home Rule in the position of a reliquary, and only exhibiting it at great moments of public stress' to be unlikely to earn sympathy or success in this country. Mr. Redmond, meanwhile, had warned the Liberal leaders in a speech at Glasgow[3] that they would find themselves in a fool's paradise if they imagined that the 'ridiculous and unmeaning policies' known as 'Administrative Home Rule' or 'Devolution' would meet the case of Ireland. Unionist leaders and speakers naturally made the most of these difficulties, and found in them the

[1] Northallerton, March 15. [2] Oct. 25. [3] Nov. 10.

one gleam of light in an otherwise desperate situation. The cry went up from a thousand platforms that the success of the Liberals would be the disruption of the Empire, and both Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour charged the Liberal leaders with practising on the Irish question an even worse evasion than they imputed to their opponents on the Tariff question.

Campbell-Bannerman took counsel with his colleagues, but shrewdly pointed out that the electioneering test cut both ways. It was at least a question whether the loss of the Irish vote, which beyond doubt would follow a repudiation of Home Rule, would not more than balance the supposed advantage of conciliating Free Traders who were alarmed about Home Rule. That being so, it was better to ask simply what was right to do. But even this reduced itself to pros and cons. It could not be right to doom the new Parliament to founder at once on the rock of the House of Lords, as it would inevitably do, if it were pledged in advance to proceed with Home Rule before anything else. That would be laying an intolerable burden on the staunch Liberals who looked at last, after ten weary years in opposition, to the chance of making some progress with Liberal and Radical measures for Great Britain. But equally it could not be right for him—a convinced and unrepentant Gladstonian Home Ruler—to conceal from the public that he was now, as always, for the larger policy, and would favour its complete adoption when circumstances permitted. Between these two positions he found salvation in what at the time was called the 'step by step' policy, always on condition that the steps should lead up to and be consistent with the final goal of a Parliament in Dublin. So far he would go but no farther, and after anxious discussion this line was agreed to by his colleagues, including Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey.

He found an opportunity of conveying it to the public in a speech at Stirling on November 23, in which the Irish question was his principal theme. After arguing that the Unionists themselves had by their own Local Government

and Land Purchase schemes 'knocked the stuffing out of the Irish scarecrow'—since such legislation would have been impossible and absurd if the Irish had been the depraved people that Unionists professed to think them—he briefly summarised the recent efforts in conciliation and showed how they had been wrecked by an irreconcilable minority. All these events, he maintained, led irresistibly to the conclusion that the Liberal policy would ultimately prevail. The question, therefore, was one of the right method of approach :—

There are two ways of capturing a stronghold—by an open and high-handed assault or by process of sap and gradual approach. In the case I have been speaking of the defenders have themselves handsomely allowed two saps and blown up their own bastion. What matters it which of these methods you use provided you ultimately accomplish the capture ?

If I were asked for advice—which is not likely perhaps—by an ardent Irish Nationalist, I would say, 'Your desire is, as mine is, to see the effective management of Irish affairs in the hands of a representative Irish authority. If I were you I would take it in any way I can get it, and if an instalment of representative control was offered to you or any administrative improvements, I would advise you thankfully to accept it, provided it was consistent with and led up to your larger policy.' I think that would be good advice. But I lay stress on the proviso—it must be consistent with and lead up to the larger policy. To secure good administration is one thing, and a good thing in itself, but good government can never be a substitute for government by the people themselves. In the immediate future, whatever be the result of a General Election, the time of Parliament will probably be mainly occupied by certain great questions—social questions for the most part—which call for treatment, and on which opinion among us is more than ripe. . . . Undoubtedly they will take time. I trust that the opportunity of making a great advance on this question of Irish government will not be long delayed, and when that opportunity comes, my belief is, my firm and honest belief is, that a greater measure of agreement than hitherto as to the ultimate solution will be found possible, and that a keener appreciation will be felt of the benefits which will flow to the entire community of British peoples throughout the world, if Ireland, from being disaffected, disheartened, im-

poverished, and disunited, takes her place a strong, harmonious, and contented portion of the Empire.—(Stirling, Nov. 23.)

This was a fair enunciation of the 'step by step' policy, with a clear warning to the Irish that Home Rule could not take the first place in the new Parliament. All his colleagues and the party at large accepted this as satisfactory, and congratulated themselves that the last obstacle to complete unity had been removed. But there was one formidable exception. Lord Rosebery would have none of it, and two days later in a speech at Bodmin declared his dissent in words which at length clinched his 'final separation' from Campbell-Bannerman:—

The responsible leader of the Liberal Party has, if I have not misread his utterance—and I do not conceive it possible to have misread his utterance because it is so careful, so strenuous, and so reiterated—he has hoisted once more in its most pronounced form the flag of Irish Home Rule. I am not going even now to utter one jarring note which can conflict with the unity of the Free Trade party. To maintain that unity, even at the cost of personal effacement, must be the duty of every man who believes Free Trade to be the greatest practical issue before the country at the present moment. But I object to the raising of the banner of Home Rule, not merely because of high constitutional objections founded on the experience, the recent experience, of foreign European countries, but also because of my belief as to what will really conduce to the welfare of the Irish people itself; but I object to it mainly on this occasion for this reason—that it impairs the unity of the Free Trade party, and that it indefinitely postpones discussion on social and educational reform, on which the country has set its heart. I will say no more on this subject except to say emphatically and explicitly and once for all that I cannot serve under that banner.—(Bodmin, Nov. 25.)

This time at all events Lord Rosebery found himself in a 'solitary furrow' except for the little group which supported him on the Bodmin platform. All the sections joined in condemning this intervention. To deliver such a blow at such a moment, could not, they said, be construed as the act of a friend. A friend would at least have waited to see if accommodation was possible by consultation

CHAP. XXVI. 1905. behind the scenes before coming into the open with a declaration of war. Letters of sympathy and assurances of support poured in upon Campbell-Bannerman, and not least from those who were thought to be followers of Lord Rosebery. Ministerialists were of course elated. Neither side had then gauged the strength of the Liberal tide in the country, and to the Unionist leaders the Bodmin speech seemed a heaven-sent opportunity to retrieve their own disasters. Here was a Liberal leader confirming the worst that they had said about the impending disruption of the Empire!

On his return to London on the following Tuesday (November 28), Lord Rosebery learnt for the first time that the line taken on Home Rule in Campbell-Bannerman's Stirling speech had been agreed between him, Mr. Asquith, and Sir Edward Grey[1] during the previous fortnight. Lord Rosebery's attack on it had therefore been a shot in the dark which hit his own friends the Vice-Presidents of the Liberal League. The truth was that the double allegiance to the leader of the party and the President of the League had led at last to this inevitable confusion. To the men in the House of Commons, the men in daily association with the authorised leader and engaged with him in the incessant and well-disciplined party warfare which had now for two years been their chief preoccupation, the League had become a rather embarrassing survival of an exhausted controversy, whereas to Lord Rosebery it still represented a living and active obligation. The President thought it inexplicable that the Vice-Presidents should not have informed him of a decision on policy which was evidently of first-class importance; the Vice-Presidents, up to their

[1] In a speech at Newcastle-under-Lyme on Nov. 27, Sir Edward said that he 'did not agree with the interpretation that Lord Rosebery had placed upon Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's speech, and that knowing, as he believed, more about their respective opinions on the Irish question than either of them knew about the other's opinions, he held there was no substantial difference of opinion between them as to what should be the practical policy of the next Liberal Government with regard to Irish affairs in the next Parliament.'

necks in the daily work of an unceasing political campaign, had simply forgotten the existence of the League.

Lord Rosebery here paid the penalty of his own refusal to regularise his position. All through this autumn opinions had varied from week to week as to whether he would or would not join a Liberal Government. At the end of October, he had spoken cordially of his 'old friend Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman' as 'shortly about to return from his well-earned holiday to take command of the Liberal forces,' and the inference had been widely drawn that he was willing to serve in a C.-B. ministry. Now in a single sentence he had made an impassable gulf between himself and his old friend. The situation was evidently past mending, but it is fair to say that Lord Rosebery had no desire to make it worse. He said firmly to those who saw him at this time that he had not the slightest intention of taking the field, as Unionists hopefully anticipated, against his old friends and colleagues. He would do nothing to embarrass the Leaguers who had thrown in their lot with Campbell-Bannerman on the Stirling formula. If the latter would say one word to intimate that the Bodmin interpretation of the Stirling speech was a misunderstanding, he would gladly reciprocate in his next speech and do whatever else he could to prevent Liberal dissension at the coming election.

Being aware of Lord Rosebery's opinions, I thought it right to convey them to Campbell-Bannerman, and I found him at Belgrave Square, just before he was proceeding to Buckingham Palace to 'kiss hands' on his appointment as Prime Minister. He listened to my story and then said quietly: 'Will you please tell Lord Rosebery that within two hours from now I expect to have accepted the King's commission to form a Government, and that being so, I can obviously say no more about the Irish question until I have had an opportunity of consulting my colleagues in the Cabinet.' This time he held the ace of trumps and he played it unflinchingly.

CHAP. XXVI. 1905.

When Lord Rosebery resigned as Prime Minister in 1895, he told Queen Victoria that he never in any circumstances intended to take office again, and he has said since that he never wavered in that resolve in the subsequent years. His friends and his colleagues in the Liberal League had perhaps only themselves to thank if they failed to take seriously an assurance which he so often repeated; but they held it to be one of the necessary assumptions of public life that an eminent man, who had been Prime Minister and who remained actively on the scene as an exponent of policy, would be willing to take the responsibility of his opinions by accepting high office, if they prevailed. To many others during these years it seemed the one hope of restoring the Liberal Party from the plight to which it had been reduced by the South African War that a schism should be prevented between Lord Rosebery and Campbell-Bannerman and the shades of opinion which they respectively represented. Beyond question Lord Rosebery's speeches in the years 1903, 1904, and 1905 contributed powerfully to the Liberal revival, and the two men seemed peculiarly fitted to supplement each other's deficiencies. But the differences between them, as events proved, were honest and deep, and it is improbable that Lord Rosebery would have been in sympathy with the main stream of Liberal opinion as Campbell-Bannerman and his colleagues interpreted it in after years. The story of this period is thus not merely one of personal antagonisms and cabals, but of a development of Liberal and Radical ideas which inevitably ran counter to the views of some of those who had served the Liberal Party well at a previous period.

Campbell-Bannerman, like Mr. Gladstone before him, moved steadily and continuously to the left. He was to the core a Radical and a democrat, and in method and habit the most practical of party men, without a touch of the disturbing 'temperament' which seemed to afflict so many other performers on the same scene. Here lay his enormous advantage over all competitors, critics, or rivals. As the years went on and experience tested him, Liberals

rejoiced that they had found a man who would not take refuge in resignation from public attacks or private vexations, who made the return of the party to power his definite object, who threw his mind into the common stock and was honestly prepared to serve in any capacity, provided the cause prevailed. He alone among the elder statesmen stood these tests; and steadily throughout these months the opinion was growing not only that he deserved the highest place by patient endurance and long service, but that he was the man who on the merits of his character and performance could most wisely and safely be entrusted with it.

About his final severance with Lord Rosebery he had no doubts. The Stirling speech represented the utmost length that he was willing to go in compromise on the Irish question. As in earlier days in the Boer War, he had serious misgivings whether he had not gone too far in his attempt to conciliate opponents who could never be appeased; and it caused him no dissatisfaction, but on the contrary great pleasure, when the Irish papers acclaimed his words as the restoration of Home Rule to the policy of the Liberal Party. So far Lord Rosebery was eminently right in reading his mind, and nothing would have induced him to say that he meant less than Lord Rosebery imputed to him. But argument on this subject is now exhausted. In the light of the sequel, history is likely to say that Liberal leaders showed too little rather than too much zeal on the Irish question in these times. That it would have been an enormous benefit to the country if the great Liberal movement now in progress could have been used to bring peace to Ireland, while the Irish Parliamentary Party retained its strength and prestige, and that Unionists would have shown greater wisdom and foresight if they had co-operated with their opponents in seeking a fair settlement instead of appealing to the fears and prejudices of their countrymen —these are propositions which will scarcely be disputed in later days. It is at all events to the credit of Campbell-Bannerman that he strongly opposed the diluting of the Liberal doctrine on Home Rule.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

The Break-up of the Government—Resignation of Mr. Balfour—To take Office or not to take it ?—Soundings among his Colleagues—His own Decision—Lingering at Belmont—The Return to London—An unexpected Obstacle—Sir Edward Grey 'all buttoned up'—Kissing Hands—Should he go to the Lords ?—A Critical Twenty-four Hours—'The Authority' decides—Sir Edward Grey's Attitude—Restoring Communications—Sir Edward Grey comes in—Penance for Mr. Haldane—A Letter from Dr. Ott—The Completion of the Ministry—Anxieties and Disappointments—A Foggy Day—All In and 'All Right.'

CHAP. XXVII.

1905.

RETURNING from abroad on November 11, Campbell-Bannerman was only just in time to be in at the death of the Unionist Government. It had been visibly breaking up during the month of November, and members of the Cabinet were now openly debating with each other as to the part which Tariff Reform should play in Unionist policy. Lord Londonderry said it was moribund;[1] Mr. Austen Chamberlain replied sharply[2] that in the view of the Prime Minister it was 'the foremost of the issues which they had to put before the people.' Mr. Chamberlain rebuked Lord Londonderry for disloyalty,[3] and stigmatised as 'humiliating' the walking-out tactics which had resulted in the unanimous acceptance by the House of Commons of propositions to which the vast majority of the Unionist Party were entirely opposed. Mr. Balfour rushed to Lord Londonderry's[4] defence and paid him compliments which were obviously pointed at Mr. Chamberlain. The Chamberlainites retorted by passing a 'whole-hog' resolution in his teeth at the Newcastle meeting[5] of the National Union of Conservative Associations,

[1] Sunderland, Nov. 1. [2] Stirchley, Nov. 2. [3] Birmingham, Nov. 3.
[4] Seaham Harbour, Nov. 11. [5] Nov. 14.

and were at length in a position to claim that they had captured the headquarters organisation of the party. In vain Mr. Balfour implored his followers to forget their differences and rally to his own proposal as the acceptable basis for uniting the party. Campbell-Bannerman seized the opportunity of putting in a word in this debate in a speech at Portsmouth on November 16, in which, after good-humouredly rallying all the parties to it, he found relief in a review of foreign affairs designed to reassure the country about the continuity of foreign policy under a Liberal Government. The crash came at the annual meeting of the Liberal Unionist Council at Bristol (Nov. 21), when, with many compliments to Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain protested vehemently against further concessions to a dissentient minority, and compared the Unionist Party to an army which was being led into battle on the principle that the lamest men should govern its march. The Balfourian policy of Retaliation was, he insisted, impossible without a general tariff.

Plainly there was a limit even to Mr. Balfour's patience, and in the next few days inspired articles in the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph* intimated that it had been reached. Not only was opinion running strongly against him in the country, but his own party had deliberately rejected his advice and given an overwhelming vote for the unequivocal declaration which for two and a half years he had been attempting to avoid. Mere persistence was clearly useless against this volume of adversity, and it was at length evident that further temporising must be fatal. But a faint hope remained that the moment chosen might not prove quite so unpropitious after all, for after two years of apparent harmony the Opposition also had run into the sudden crisis described in the last chapter. Both sides, as it afterwards turned out, greatly overrated the disturbance caused or threatened by Lord Rosebery's Bodmin speech, for the country was beyond the point when any domestic incident in the Liberal Party could turn it from its intention to make an end of the Government. But

CHAP. XXVII. 1905. that was by no means evident to contemporary observers at the end of November 1905, and when Mr. Balfour's resignation was announced on December 4, he was thought by both parties to have caught his opponents at a disadvantage and given himself a last chance of mitigating, if not retrieving, the disasters of his Government.

Mr. Balfour, moreover, had resigned instead of dissolving, and this also seemed a smart stroke in the game of tactics. The legend of C.-B.'s unpopularity was strong among Conservatives, and many of them thought it only necessary to show that he would actually be Prime Minister, if Mr. Balfour gave up, for an immediate revulsion of opinion to set in. It was openly said that such a demonstration before the election would be invaluable. Electors who had lazily followed the stream and cast their votes against the Government at by-elections would see with consternation that they had actually placed in power—if only for a brief period—the man who had defamed the British Army and set himself against the nation in its time of peril. The brief vision of such a Government with all the impossible people who would be called to high office would stem the tide and cause serious and reflecting people to renew their allegiance to the Unionist Party. Mr. Balfour, too, would have the great advantage of being able to recover the initiative before the election. Instead of standing on the defensive and miserably apologising for the shifts and turns of his Government during the previous two years; instead of just keeping a perilous balance between contending sections of his own party, he would now join hands with Mr. Chamberlain in a bold aggressive against the new Government. Unionists were all but unanimous that he had done wisely.

Nor were Liberals by any means certain that he was wrong. Encouraging as the by-elections had been, it was an act of faith to assume that a general election would give corresponding results. There was always a doubt whether the process of Government-making would not renew the schisms in the Liberal Party. The Bodmin speech was an

omen which could not be ignored. Most of the pundits were agreed that all precedents were against the formation of a Government by an Opposition in the last weeks or months of an expiring Parliament. Disraeli had refused to undertake it in 1873, and been thoroughly justified by the result of compelling his great opponent to continue to the end. Salisbury had done it in 1885 and spoilt whatever chance his party might have had in the election of that year. The Liberal Press was almost unanimous that Mr. Balfour's resignation was the last of the tricks in the long game of skill, and earnestly exhorted the leader to beware.

He, in the meantime, remained quietly at Belmont and could with difficulty be persuaded that anything was going to happen. He had heard these tales a hundred times before and could see no reason to think that, having survived the far worse perils of the session, Mr. Balfour would throw up the sponge because Mr. Chamberlain had made an awkward speech at Bristol. In spite of warning letters from colleagues he declined to come south; but as the rumours of Mr. Balfour's intentions became more persistent he began to take soundings among his colleagues as to what should be done in the somewhat improbable event of Mr. Balfour's resigning:—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

BELMONT, *Nov.* 25, '05.—We are evidently going to have a little breathing time.

Many of our people appear to be impressed with the disadvantages of accepting office after a resignation. Any one can see that there would be inconvenience, and that as a mere move in the party game it would be clearer to refuse.

But it seems to me that these inconveniences would be outweighed by the damping effect on our fighting men throughout the country, when after all our clamour we invited the Gov. to retain office. They know nothing of tricks and pedantries and judge by facts: and the fact would be that we declined to undertake responsibilities which we had been asking for through these years.

Then if our refusal postponed the Election, however little, we should be blamed for a spoiled session, when by pluckily undertaking office we should have time to prepare for a full session.

I should very much like to have your mind. The option may not come to us, but it is well to be prepared.

His own opinion was never in doubt, as he revealed in a note to Mr. Vaughan Nash:—

Nov. 30, '05.

Personally I am strongly against refusing office: it would be ascribed to divisions or to cowardice. It would slump our stalwarts who do not care for or understand tactics. But, of course, others must have their say—I do not attach much importance to the opinions the *Daily Chronicle* paraded. Refusal is not in keeping with the clamour we have made for the last year or two.

Lord Ripon was—a little more cautiously—of the same opinion 'unless the feeling in the party was manifestly hostile.' Mr. Morley counselled acceptance at once and unconditionally, and the older men were generally in favour of the bolder course. Others advised him to feel his way, but to make quite sure before declining that Mr. Balfour really would be compelled to go on. What if the King should send for Lord Rosebery, and he and the Duke of Devonshire should succeed in forming a Coalition of Liberal Imperialists and Unionist Free Traders to the confusion of C.B. and the Radicals? The younger men were generally for refusal on the ground that the advantage of attacking the Government and arraigning it for its misdeeds would be seriously compromised if it had passed out of existence before the election; but some changed their ground and wrote hastily withdrawing their previous letters on reconsideration. Undoubtedly, said one of them, Mr. Balfour meant to lay a trap, but there were some traps which one was obliged to walk into with one's eyes open.

There was little light to be got from this correspondence, but now, as always, he took broad and simple views of the situation. The point of tactics was of almost no importance; nothing that could happen in the next few weeks

would prevent the country from judging the Government as a Government, and casting its vote on the big issues raised in the last three years. It would be folly, after all these years spent in arraigning the Government and denouncing it for clinging to office, to show a moment's hesitation in accepting the consequences, and taking up the responsibility. Mr. Balfour had ruined his party with tactics, and the Liberal Party should, above all things, eschew that example. But he was still sceptical about the gossip that reached him from London, and firmly declined to put himself in evidence by coming south a moment before the thing was certain.

His colleagues chafed at this aloofness, and private intimations began to come from the other side that he really must be on the spot. On Wednesday, November 30, I myself received positive information that Mr. Balfour would resign on the following Sunday or Monday, and was asked to get into communication with Campbell-Bannerman and to beg him to come to London, and at the same time to inform the Chief Liberal Whip. I carried out these instructions, but on Friday he was still at Belmont without any apparent intention of moving, and on that day further urgent telegrams were sent to him by Mr. Morley and Mr. Gladstone. Then at last he moved and, travelling by the night train, reached London on Monday morning, December 4—the day of Mr. Balfour's resignation.

II

As previously stated, I saw him that afternoon, and in a diary which I kept of these days I find it recorded that he 'told me that Grey and Asquith had just been with him, and that "those fellows" had been very amiable and reasonable on the subject of Ireland and that there was no difference worth thinking of between him and them.' But a very disagreeable surprise awaited him. Sir Edward Grey came again at 10 o'clock that evening (Monday, Dec. 4), and told him point-blank that unless he took a peerage and transferred his leadership from the Commons to the

CHAP. XXVII. 1905. Lords, he (Sir Edward) would not accept office or take any part in the Government. Campbell-Bannerman was greatly wounded and surprised, and in describing the interview afterwards was at no pains to conceal his indignation. He spoke of Sir Edward Grey as having come to him 'all buttoned up and never undoing one button.' It was supposed at the time that both Mr. Asquith and Mr. Haldane were parties to this ultimatum, and now at the critical moment it seemed as if Mr. Balfour had been right in counting on the dissensions of the Liberal Party to ruin its chance of forming an acceptable Government. Within the next twenty-four hours the situation proved to be a little less black than it had appeared on the Monday evening, since by accepting the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, Mr. Asquith made it clear that he was not a party to the Grey ultimatum. Still, the omission of Sir Edward Grey from the Government would have been a serious matter, for a large part of the public apparently counted on him to be Foreign Secretary in the new Government, and, let alone the disappointment to the right wing of the party, there was no other obvious candidate for the post.

With this burden on his mind he kissed hands [1] as Prime Minister the following day (Tuesday, Dec. 5), and he was scarcely consoled when the King too spoke of the possibility of his taking a peerage to relieve the strain on his health. This suggested to him that the King had been prompted by the Liberal Leaguers, and it increased his repugnance to falling in with their views. He did not, however, definitely say 'No' to the King, and during Tuesday and Wednesday he even gave the impression to some who saw him that his mind was moving towards acceptance. Some of the friends whom he consulted, though greatly regretting the manner in which the proposal had been made to him,

[1] Actually and literally he did not 'kiss hands,' for as he was leaving the Palace it was suddenly remembered that this sacramental part of the ceremony had been forgotten. The King's Secretary hastily went back and consulted His Majesty, who graciously consented that it should be 'taken as done.'

were yet of opinion that his health would not be equal to the strain of leading in the Commons and conducting the Government, and advised him in his own interest to leave the leadership in the Commons to Mr. Asquith. By Wednesday morning he had at least reconsidered the point-blank refusal which he had given to Sir Edward Grey on the Monday evening, but he reserved his decision until he had had an opportunity of consulting with his wife—' the authority' without whom a matter of this gravity could not possibly be decided. In the meantime, it had been suggested to him that Sir Edward Grey's scruples might be overcome if Mr. Haldane could be appointed Lord Chancellor, but this he had flatly declined, and from the beginning it had been a fixed point in his scheme that Sir Robert Reid should fill that office.

Lady Campbell-Bannerman reached Belgrave Square from Scotland on Wednesday evening, and declared at once for 'no surrender.' He might have this modesty for himself, but she was not going to stand by and see him lower his flag to men who had opposed him through all the lean and hungry years of opposition, and now wanted to put him on the shelf when the victory was in his hands. It was intolerable that such an affront should be put upon him by junior men who had never held high office. That final decision was conveyed through Mr. Asquith [1] to Sir Edward Grey on Wednesday evening, and Sir Edward returned a reasoned and polite answer which seemed finally to close the door on his side. He explained that he had felt great reluctance to enter any Government of which Lord Rosebery could not be a member, and that he had felt in

[1] On Wednesday, Dec. 6, Mr. Asquith, who was staying at Hatfield, came up to London, and saw both Sir Edward and Campbell-Bannerman. He 'found Grey in an uncompromising three-cornered humour.' To Campbell-Bannerman he said, 'It is no use going over the ground again, my dear C.-B. I make a personal appeal to you which I have never done before; I urge you to go to the House of Lords and solve this difficulty.' 'C.-B. was moved, but he repeated that he wished her (his wife) to be the final arbiter; with which our interview ended.'—*The Autobiography of Margot Asquith*, vol. ii. p. 74.

CHAP. XXVII. 1905. the circumstances that before he could come in, the declarations of policy in one House or the other must be in the hands of one of these with whom he had been most closely associated. Since this was impossible he felt that he could not give that undertaking of whole-hearted co-operation in council and outside which he ought to give before becoming Sir Henry's Minister. He had always regarded the prospect of political office with great personal reluctance, and, as things were, it was better for him to remain outside, retaining his freedom, but with every intention of giving public support to Liberal policy as long as he retained any public position. This letter was despatched to Belgrave Square on Thursday afternoon.

The diary which I kept at this time enables me to give precise details of what happened in the next few hours. I saw Mr. Gladstone early in the afternoon of Thursday and learnt from him of Campbell-Bannerman's final refusal to go to the Lords, and agreed with him that it would probably bring the corresponding refusal from Sir Edward Grey. But there were still three days before the Cabinet list need be presented to the King, and I strongly urged that, whatever Grey's reply might be, the question should not be considered closed till the last minute of the twelfth hour, and begged Mr. Gladstone to use his influence with the Prime Minister to keep the Foreign Office open while Sir Edward Grey had an opportunity of talking the matter over with his friends, one of the oldest and most intimate of whom, Mr. (now Sir Arthur) Acland, was at hand. The broken communications were thus restored, and during the next six hours there were long and anxious consultations between Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey at the former's residence in Whitehall Court, and between both of them and Mr. Acland at his flat in St. James's Court. At nine word came out from the conclave that the door was half open, and a message was sent to Campbell-Bannerman repeating the suggestion that he should not fill either Foreign Office or War Office. But Mr. Haldane, who had used his influence against standing out, had anticipated

the messenger and himself told the Prime Minister of the probable outcome of this reconsideration. He returned from Belgrave Square to Buckingham Court, and before midnight both he and Sir Edward Grey had made up their minds to come in. This resolution was not made easier by an article in the *Times* the following morning which recounted the circumstances accurately up to the time when Campbell-Bannerman received Sir Edward's letter, but was not informed of the change which took place later. For a moment it seemed as if the concordat was again in danger, but this obstacle also was overcome before mid-day, and it was generally known by Friday afternoon that Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane were to join the Government.

There were gossiping tongues which suggested that the two men had all the time been manœuvring to obtain two of the principal Secretaryships of State for themselves and their group. Sir Edward Grey never at any time put in any claim to any office. His difficulty was not about the place he should fill, but about joining a Government from which his old friend and chief, Lord Rosebery, was excluded, and the composition of which seemed to him unduly weighted by one kind of opinion. Then, as later, he was absolutely sincere when he spoke of his reluctance to take office; but when once he had decided to do so, he was prepared to leave himself entirely at the Prime Minister's disposal. What weighed with him on reflection was the argument, put strongly to him by Mr. Acland, that he was really not entitled to imperil the whole Liberal cause, and with it the cause of Free Trade, by reviving the old differences on the eve of an election, the issue of which at that moment was uncertain and could only, as it seemed then, be assured by the absolute unity of the Liberal Party. In coming in he made no conditions, and his appointment to the Foreign Office was entirely Campbell-Bannerman's own initiative.

That office had been his gravest perplexity. His first thought had been to appoint Lord Cromer, to whom he cabled at Cairo immediately after kissing hands on the 5th. But Lord Cromer, who was then far from well, had

CHAP. XXVII. 1905. replied on the following day that, though greatly flattered, he felt obliged after mature reflection to decline it. 'I really,' he said, 'have not the health or strength to undertake the work. I am sure that I should break down in six months, and that I could not give satisfaction either to myself or my colleagues.' During the next twenty-four hours the Prime Minister thought anxiously of other possibilities, some of which filled his colleagues with dismay. After seeing him on Thursday (before Sir Edward Grey's decision was known), Mr. Morley wrote him a warning letter against appointing 'light-weights' who had no experience and were little known to the public. 'The F.O.' he said, 'is a terribly weak place in your armour.' It was, therefore, a real relief to him when almost simultaneously with the receipt of this letter the door was reopened to the appointment of Sir Edward Grey.

To Mr. Haldane his feelings were perhaps a little different in these days. He had come to think of him as at the bottom of most of the agitation which had troubled his peace and that of the party in recent years. 'Serve him right,' wrote an old friend on hearing that the brilliant lawyer was destined to the office which of all others had been the grave of reputations in recent years, and Campbell-Bannerman was certainly not unaware of the element of penance in this appointment. To the recipient the post was thoroughly congenial. Next to the Woolsack there was none that he liked better. 'I am fully aware of the immense difficulties,' he wrote in accepting, 'but it is my own desire to try what close work will do to meet them.'

A letter which bears a later date may, I think, fitly be inserted here :—

FALLODON, CHESTON BANK,
NORTHUMBERLAND, *Dec.* 31, 1907.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—I am so glad that you have recovered. My thoughts have often gone back to the days when this Government was being formed, and I have felt from the early days of this Parliament that all my forecast before the elections was wrong, and that your presence in the House of Commons has been not only desirable but essential to manage this party, and

keep it together; and so it continues to be; and I most sincerely wish you health and strength for the coming year.—Yours sincerely, E. GREY.

This part of the story might have been written differently if a certain letter from Vienna had been delivered a week earlier:—

IX FERSTELGASSE 3, WIEN, 9/XII, '05.

DEAR SIR HENRY,—I had the intention to wait, until everything was fixed and you officially called 'Prime Minister,' but the events I read of in our paper are too quick and force me to write to you earlier. . . . .

I beg the Lord to fortify and strengthen your health that it may stand you all the tremendous work and responsibility which is now lying on your shoulders. And as your devoted friend, if I may be so arrogant as to call myself that—I really can't find another word to express my warm devotion to you, dear Sir Henry—I am very very shocked, to read in the papers that you have the intention of remaining in the House of Commons, besides directing the whole governmental machinery.

Please do not call me impertinent, if I take the liberty of raising my voice and begging you not to overdo yourself or presume on your health and—excuse the medical practitioner—also on your age by undertaking such an enormous burden of work.

I remember very well a time when you and Lady Campbell-Bannerman were kind enough to discuss these matters with me, and I remember very well that we all three agreed that for your precious health it would be best for you to go to the House of Lords besides occupying the Government.

I am sure that those who are persuading you to remain in the House of Commons are not your true friends—I beg your pardon, in that direction—and that they do not think of your precious health as the most important matter.

But if they don't care so much for your health as perhaps for your glory—or political reputation—I must call them very short-sighted, as they don't think what may be the end, if you are overworking yourself, and then in shorter or longer time a very bad reaction with all its consequences may set in and deprive them for a long time if not for ever of their illustrious leader.

Please, dear Sir Henry, excuse the great liberty I am taking with you in these serious matters, but the circumstances also are *serious*, and they and my great devotion to you and the knowledge

CHAP. XXVII. I have had for years of your health may be excuses for my open language.

1905. Please be careful and think that besides your country and your King, you have a devoted wife, who has a right to beg you to spare her your precious health.

I hope that Lady Campbell-Bannerman is in good health and not in too great anxiety about your plans and your health. I gather that her Ladyship has remained in Scotland, and I must heartily hope that besides all you are intending to do you will find time to go over Christmas for some holiday to your country place, *away from work and anxiety*.

Again repeating my best and warmest congratulations, and also repeating my most serious warnings, I beg you, dear Sir Henry, to keep for me in your new high position, the confidence and kind benevolence you have so often proved to me before.—With most respectful compliments and best wishes. Always your most devoted DR. ERNEST OTT.

Never did a trusty physician deliver a plainer warning in more affectionate terms. This letter is dated Dec. 9 and could not have been delivered in London before Dec. 11. Campbell-Bannerman's decision was taken on Dec. 6.

III

With the Foreign Office and the War Office held in suspense, Cabinet-making was attended with more than ordinary difficulties. Alternative plans had to be made on the assumptions that the two recalcitrants would come in and that they would stay out, which made some of the final selections a matter of necessity rather than of choice. A series of accidents left the Prime Minister with nothing but the sadly inappropriate Irish Office to give to his old friend and faithful supporter, Mr. Bryce. The differences in salary and traditional differences in rank between different Cabinet offices presented the usual puzzles. A few outstanding men, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Morley, Sir Edward Grey, were plainly designated for certain places, and the Prime Minister's mind was made up about others. Sir Robert Reid should be Lord Chancellor, Lord Elgin should be well placed, Lord Ripon should be brought in; Lord Crewe

and Mr. Birrell were both high on his list of indispensables. The Ministry should be well salted with new and vigorous young men, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Sydney Buxton, Mr. Sinclair, Mr. Lewis Harcourt, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Reginald McKenna, and others who had shown their mettle in opposition; and that hard fighter and vigorous representative of Labour, Mr. John Burns, should have nothing less than Cabinet rank. Lord Carrington,[1] another old friend whom he greatly liked and trusted, should be brought into the inner circle. But how to place them all and at the same time do justice to faithful supporters of sterling parliamentary character but not commanding abilities was, after ten years of opposition, no ordinary problem. The usual graduation which establishes 'claims' by slow ascent from under-secretaryships was necessarily lacking, and for a great many it seemed a blind chance which should catch the Prime Minister's eye.

Small wonder if many were 'on the door-step' of 29 Belgrave Square during these days. It is customary to laugh at politicians in the throes of office-seeking, but men of other professions may ask themselves what they would feel and how they would conduct themselves if at a given moment their entire career were at stake on the will or whim, as it might seem, of an inscrutable power which can neither be approached nor pleaded with, and whose decision when given is blasting and irretrievable. To be obliged to keep a perfect dignity and reticence when others may be intriguing, to spend miserable hours waiting for a summons which may never come, to be fearful of going out lest it may come in your absence or of returning home to find it not there, to see the days passing and offices filled and yourself forgotten, to be conscious that a large audience is watching your discomfiture—this is the fate of even distinguished men, let alone the scores of others who at this moment are feeling for their footing on the first rung of the ladder. Who shall cast stones if a Prime Minister's letter-bag at such times reveals some of the secrets of human

[1] Now the Marquis of Lincolnshire.

CHAP. XXVII. 1905.

nature? One man is taking an untimely holiday at Cairo, and sends a forlorn telegram to say that a cabled word will bring him home by the next boat. Alas for him, he is not indispensable, and there are a dozen candidates on the spot for the place that he desires. Another rashly attaches conditions to his acceptance of the offer made to him, and to his dismay the Prime Minister answers blandly regretting that he should have 'declined.' Others accept but frankly express their disappointment at being so modestly or unsuitably rated. One receives his appointment on the last day, but too late to recall a letter to his constituents publicly expressing his feelings at having been overlooked, and this quaintly appears in the newspapers together with the announcement of his appointment. Yet another passes the week in intimate association with the Prime Minister without being told what place he is to have, and learns for the first time from a friend of his appointment to a considerable office. The wives, meantime, are not negligible. Some of them boldly break through the rules which are binding on husbands and sons, and even rush the inner sanctum where the Prime Minister sits guarded by his secretaries. All the time the Press must be at the door seeking intelligent anticipations of facts officially withheld.

Campbell-Bannerman was as merciful and kindly as the circumstances permitted, and his shrewd and genial humour came into play in all the little emergencies. When his foot was down it was down, and nothing would induce him to take it up. But outside a few predilections and antipathies, he was ready for all compromises and adjustments which would help to trim the ship and give her a smart appearance. If there was any criticism from his friends, it was only that in his effort to be fair he had been a little more than just to his old opponents and critics of the Liberal League, but he was well justified by the warm expressions of approval with which the new Ministry[1] was greeted by the public as a whole. Newspapers usually hostile to the Liberal Party said frankly

[1] The final composition is given in an Appendix to this chapter.

when the list was published that the new Ministry was composed of strong and capable men worthy to be trusted with the affairs of the Empire. If Mr. Balfour had speculated on the Liberal Party being divided anew in the attempt to form a Government, or if he had calculated on certain powerful men standing out, he was, as this narrative has shown, not wholly without plausible ground; but if he or other ex-Ministers had supposed that a Government headed by 'C.-B.' and comprising all the available material which the Liberal Party had at its disposal would be distasteful to the public, it was already evident that they had seriously miscalculated the state of opinion. The expected difficulties having been overcome, the formation of the Government before the election was a signal advantage to the Liberal Party.

The list was presented to the King on Sunday, December 10, and the following day the new Ministers went to kiss hands at Buckingham Palace before taking charge of their Departments. It was a day of dense black fog, and some of the new office-holders were soon in difficulties. 'Grey, Fowler, and I,' records Lord Haldane, 'were to go together in a brougham which I had, but it stuck hopelessly in the Mall, and I got out, fortunately sticking to the leather case which held my seals as Secretary of State. The result was that I lost all traces of the brougham in the black fog. Fowler remained in it and ultimately it managed to grope its way to the Palace. Grey left the Palace after me, and losing himself came in contact with the circular hoarding surrounding the late Queen's statue in front of the Palace. Thinking this was the way to the Foreign Office, he groped round and round it and before he had found out his mistake had lost an hour. For myself I got my way with difficulty to Pall Mall, where the War Office then was, and I arrived with muddy boots, and was greeted by the astounded officials who had been waiting for me.' The new Ministers recovered themselves and dined together with the Prime Minister at Belgrave Square the same evening—a large and cheerful party which sat down after dinner to discuss

CHAP. XXVII. 1905.

points in the deliverances which would now have to be made officially in view of the forthcoming election. That the old Parliament would never see the light again and that the elections should be held before the end of January were fixed points. All else was amity and harmony, cross-currents forgotten, Leaguer, Labour, pro-Boer, and plain Liberal united in congratulating their host on the goal reached after long toil. One voice was heard at the end: 'Suppose after all we don't get a majority, suppose A. J. B. is back six weeks from now, what sort of figure shall we cut then?' The Prime Minister was the last man to harbour this doubt. He knew, as he said frequently during these days, that 'it was all right.'

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER XXVII

SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN'S ADMINISTRATION

Sir HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN	Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury.
EARL LOREBURN (Sir ROBERT REID) . .	Lord Chancellor.
EARL OF CREWE . .	Lord President of the Council.
MARQUESS OF RIPON .	Lord Privy Seal.
Mr. ASQUITH . . .	Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Sir EDWARD GREY . .	Foreign Secretary.
EARL OF ELGIN . .	Colonial Secretary.
Mr. JOHN MORLEY . .	Secretary for India.
Mr. HERBERT GLADSTONE .	Home Secretary.
Mr. HALDANE . . .	Secretary for War.
LORD TWEEDMOUTH . .	First Lord of the Admiralty.
Mr. JOHN SINCLAIR . .	Secretary for Scotland.
Sir HENRY FOWLER . .	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.
Mr. LLOYD GEORGE . .	President of the Board of Trade.
Mr. JOHN BURNS . .	President of the Local Government Board.
EARL CARRINGTON . .	President of the Board of Agriculture.
Mr. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL .	President of the Board of Education.

Mr. JAMES BRYCE . .	Chief Secretary for Ireland.
Mr. SYDNEY BUXTON .	Postmaster-General.

(The above formed the Cabinet.)

EARL OF ABERDEEN . .	Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.
LORD-JUSTICE WALKER .	Lord Chancellor of Ireland.
Mr. LEWIS HARCOURT .	First Commissioner of Works.
Mr. REGINALD McKENNA .	Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Mr. GEORGE WHITELEY .	Patronage Secretary to the Treasury.
Mr. J. A. PEASE Mr. HERBERT LEWIS Mr. F. FREEMAN-THOMAS Capt. CECIL NORTON	Junior Lords of the Treasury.
Mr. R. K. CAUSTON . .	Paymaster-General.
LORD EDMOND FITZMAURICE	Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs.
Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL .	Under-Secretary for the Colonies.
Mr. J. E. ELLIS . .	Under-Secretary for India.
EARL OF PORTSMOUTH .	Under-Secretary for War.
Mr. T. R. BUCHANAN .	Financial Secretary to the War Office.
Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT	Civil Lord of the Admiralty.
Mr. EDMUND ROBERTSON	Secretary to the Admiralty.
Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL	Under Home Secretary.
Mr. H. E. KEARLEY	Secretary to the Board of Trade.
Mr. WALTER RUNCIMAN	Secretary to the Local Government Board.
Mr. T. LOUGH . .	Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Education.
Sir J. LAWSON WALTON	Attorney-General.
Sir W. S. ROBSON .	Solicitor-General.
Mr. THOMAS SHAW .	Lord Advocate.
Mr. ALEXANDER URE	Solicitor-General for Scotland.
Mr. R. R. CHERRY .	Attorney-General for Ireland.
Mr. REDMOND BARRY	Solicitor-General for Ireland.

HOUSEHOLD APPOINTMENTS

LORD HAWKESBURY . .	Lord Steward.
VISCOUNT ALTHORP . .	Lord Chamberlain.
EARL OF SEFTON . .	Master of the Horse.
Sir EDWARD STRACHEY .	Treasurer of the Household.
THE MASTER OF ELIBANK.	Comptroller of the Household.
Mr. WENTWORTH BEAUMONT	Vice-Chamberlain.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LIBERAL TRIUMPH

At the Albert Hall—A Hundred and Eighty Degree Speech—An Announcement on Chinese Labour—Foreign Affairs—A Free Trade Peroration—Compliments from Colleagues—Reception at Dunfermline—His Election Address—The Attack on the Government—The Liberal Triumph—An Encounter with Mr. Balfour.

1905-1906.

THE new Cabinet met on the 14th and 20th of December, and again on the 21st; and Campbell-Bannerman made his first public deliverance as Prime Minister at a meeting in the Albert Hall, organised by the London Liberal Federation with Mr. W. H. Dickinson in the chair. Here he faced an immense and enthusiastic audience surrounded by a great company of colleagues and supporters. His speech was necessarily elaborate and highly prepared—one of those 180° speeches which Mr. Gladstone, borrowing a phrase from Cardinal Newman, thought fatal to effective oratory. Nevertheless, it abounded in lively sallies and developed as much of Liberal doctrine and policy as could be packed into a crowded hour. 'The Government,' he began by saying, 'has executed what we may call a moonlight flitting. It has run away, not in the broad day of the session, not even in the twilight of October, but in the murky midnight of December. They had long ago lost, as they well knew, the confidence of the country. They still boasted in a feeble and uncertain way of holding the confidence of the House of Commons; but last of all and worst of all, they lost confidence in themselves. And they are gone. We were told—told emphatically and abundantly—that the method of their going would be a masterpiece of tactical skill. Tactics! Tactics! Ladies and gentlemen, the country is tired of their tactics. It

would have been better for them if they had had less of tactics and more of reality. But they have lived for some years on nothing but tactics and now they have died of tactics.'

Two characteristics were outstanding in the late Administration, 'an infinite cleverness which was not always clever, and an inexhaustible fund of self-approbation.' They were convinced that 'they were the only people in this kingdom who could form a Government, and that if any one else made the effort, any Cabinet which could be got together would be at once distasteful to the country and destitute of strength and unity. That was the design which lurked in the December resignation and it has come to naught, for a Government has been formed amid the respect of our opponents, which I gratefully acknowledge, and amid the confidence and satisfaction of our friends.' To avoid these evil practices of boastfulness and over-cleverness, to remember that this was the moment of their trial and not of their triumph, were the lessons that they could best learn from the enemy. But because the Government had gone, it must not be allowed to escape judgment on its past actions. Its fiscal policy? What was it and where was it? After three years of turmoil in which the work of Parliament had been paralysed, in which the thoughts of the nation had been almost entirely concentrated upon this one problem, and after this great controversy had echoed and re-echoed from one end of the land to the other, they saw the head of the late Government of Tariff Reform inciting his followers to minimise and belittle the issue which was to stand in the forefront of his programme, and to hide it away behind some other issue. He was, nevertheless, making a serious mistake if he imagined that it was in his power to fix the issue at a General Election like a holiday-tripper who went to a railway-station and, after reading the advertisements, tried to make up his mind whether Margate or Ramsgate should be his destination.

From this he passed to a survey of world affairs, beginning with India and a compliment to the new Secretary of

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906. State, his old friend Mr. Morley, who, he hinted, would know how to deal with the angry controversy between the outgoing Viceroy (Lord Curzon) and the Commander-in-Chief, which the late Government had bequeathed to its successors. Then he took up the question of South Africa, and raised a storm of cheers by announcing that instructions had been given to stop forthwith 'the recruitment and embarkation of coolies in China, and their importation into South Africa.' Foreign affairs followed, and a firm promise to maintain the *Entente* with France and the Treaty with Japan, and to cultivate good relations with Russia and Germany. 'In the case of Germany,' he put in, 'I see no cause whatever for estrangement in any of the interests of either people, and we welcome the unofficial demonstrations of friendship which have lately been passing between the two countries.' Then there was the United States, 'with the Government and people of which country we are bound by the closest ties of race, tradition, and fellowship.' The Government would be 'opposed to aggression and to adventure, and would be animated by a desire to be on the best terms with all nationalities and to co-operate with them in the work of civilisation.' But while 'the outlook in foreign affairs was most pleasing, the growth of armaments remained a great danger to the world.' 'A policy of huge armaments keeps alive and stimulates and feeds the belief that force is the best if not the only solution of international differences. It is a policy that tends to inflame old sores and to create new ones. What nobler rôle could this great country assume than at the fitting moment to place itself at the head of a League of Peace through whose instrumentality the great work of peaceful arbitration could be effected?'

From this the transition was natural to the question of internal economy. How, with an increasing military expenditure, could we do the work of reform that remained to be done at home, and at the same time bring relief to the taxpayer? Militarism, extravagance, protection were weeds which grew in the same field, and if they wanted to

clear the field for honest cultivation they must clear them all out. Next came a rapid survey of home politics. Popular control was the key that would unlock many doors. It was the foundation of their education policy and the key to their licensing policy. It was, above all, the foundation of their Irish policy, which was 'that those domestic questions which concern the Irish people only and not ourselves should, as and when opportunity offers, be left in their hands'—a sentence much thought over and carefully worded. Then to the land question, treated in vivid phrases which have often been quoted in subsequent years. 'We desire to develop our undeveloped estates in this country—to colonise our own country.' 'We wish to make the land less of a pleasure-ground for the rich and more of a treasure-house for the nation.' Addressing himself next to his London audience, he declared London questions to be urgent. 'London presents a group of problems positively terrifying by their dimensions, problems of housing and overcrowding, problems of the unemployed, of the over-employed, and of the badly employed.' What could the Government do? They could strengthen the hand of the municipalities by reforming the land system and the rating system, 'in which I include the imposition of a rate on ground values'; they could make it easier to relieve the congestion of the centre, and to promote orderly and healthy development on the outskirts; they could reform the Poor Law and institute careful experiments with a view to mitigating the evils of unemployment. Finally came a promise to deal quickly with the law of combination, then 'gravely affected by a series of judicial decisions.' The peroration returned to the fiscal question:—

I rejoice to think that since the Free Trade controversy was first raised there has been no sign of faltering or wavering on our side, and that Liberalism has been true to its historic mission. In the great struggle which will shortly be upon us I do not think it too much to say that all that we Liberals hold dear is at stake, because if once you open the door to Protection, what hope is there for those great objects of reform and economy upon which

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906. our hearts are set? Depend upon it that in fighting for our open ports and for the cheap food and material upon which the welfare of the people and the prosperity of our commerce depend we are fighting against those powers, privileges, injustices, and monopolies which are unalterably opposed to the triumph of democratic principle. Be confident, therefore, but I would ask you not to be over-confident. Against you is a strong coalition of interests and powers. Against you is a wealthy and a great party, divided indeed, divided in the details of fiscal strategy, but united in its determination to undermine and overthrow the citadel of Free Trade. Let us then be worthy of our fathers who went before us and won for us this great privilege of freedom, and let us beware lest through any fault of ours, through slackness or indifference or over-confidence on our part, so great and vital a national interest is imperilled.

The meeting was among the first to be interrupted by Suffragettes, who were then starting their militant campaign, and though Campbell-Bannerman was known to be favourable to their cause, that did not secure him immunity from their attacks either then or later. He was sensitive to these interruptions, and if anything could have spoilt his nerve at a public meeting, it was a scene of violence in which a woman was being ejected. Some of the newspapers complained the next day that parts of the speech had been heard with difficulty, and, if so, it was due to this cause. But the meeting was otherwise an unqualified success, and the speech, as read in the newspapers, was warmly approved by all shades of Liberal opinion. The general policy of the party was judged to have been stated in true perspective, with emphasis and accent on the right places, and no pretext given for schism or criticism.

His colleagues wrote in warm approval:—

Mr. John Morley to Campbell-Bannerman

INDIA OFFICE, *Dec.* 22, 1905.—I do with all my heart congratulate you on last night. It was the crowning triumph of prolonged operations. My wife was there. She is an old hand at such things, and she declares she never saw such a reception as you had. The speech I thought admirably well conceived in every respect.

Altogether, I never felt in a more joyful humour about your position. It is a splendid victory over fraud and selfishness.

I have just had half an hour at the Palace. Extremely kind and civil. I told him I was trying with good hopes of success to build a bridge of gold for the angry creatures, and that we would have no more rows.

Then he turned to Chinese labour—very uneasy—fears too quick—surely Selborne on the spot knows best—what a disaster if Selborne should bolt, etc. I did my best to allay.

Take life easy for a time.

Lord Ripon to Campbell-Bannerman

Dec. 22, 1905.—As I had no opportunity of speaking to you after your great speech last night, I cannot resist the impulse which prompts me to tell you how heartily I agree with all you said and how proud I am to be permitted, through your confidence, to take a part in carrying out a policy so entirely in accord with my life-long opinions.

Mr. Balfour, meanwhile, had vehemently denounced the new Government and the party which supported it as the 'apostles of imperial disintegration.' This, however, was scarcely impressive, for the man in the street asked why, if this was a true bill, he had voluntarily given such a Government the opportunity of obtaining power, and, in any case, whether it was generous or right to launch these denunciations upon a Government which so far had done nothing but take up the responsibility which he had laid down. The tactical idea of shifting from the defence to the attack at the last moment was in fact marred by the general sense that the new Administration should be given a fair chance, and that on their own record the outgoing Ministers were the people least entitled to attack it before it had done anything amiss. In their efforts to rally their own supporters, partisans are apt to forget that there is a judgment beyond party which comes into play on great occasions.

II

Two days later (Dec. 23) he went to Belmont, and, in spite of the turmoil without, contrived to spend a quiet

Christmas time alone with his wife and Mr. Nash. But there was Government business to do, his election address to write, and material to be collected for the deluge of oratory which was now in front of him. On the 29th he opened his campaign—according to his invariable practice—among his constituents, to whom at Dunfermline he now presented himself for the first time as Prime Minister. The ovation which he received from his own people greatly pleased and touched him. Enthusiastic supporters crowded the hall and overflowed into the streets; a crimson cloth with the dates 1868-1905 inscribed on it in large white letters showed with pride his long connection with the constituency. His reply to these old friends must be recorded:—

It is with pride as well as with pleasure that I stand here again to receive at your hands those expressions of kindly goodwill which you have reiterated to me through so many years in the past, but never with greater, or even with so great, fervour and warmth as to-night. There is, indeed, something, as the Provost has said, in this present occasion which is exceptional, because I come among you fresh from undertaking the highest duties, the highest responsibilities, which any subject of the King can be called upon to assume. I do not even now realise the extent of those responsibilities; but I can assure you of this that while I take a high view, and perhaps because I take a high view of the position to which I have been called, I take a humble view of my own qualifications. I know that if I discharge my duties with any degree of success or of advantage to our country it will be due, under the blessing of God, to the gracious consideration of our Sovereign, to the faithful co-operation of my colleagues, to the confident support of my political friends throughout the country, to the proved fidelity of my own constituents, and to the generous intelligence of my countrymen of all parties and opinions and classes. In all these respects I am conscious that I have been fortunate beyond measure and far beyond my deserts, and I am profoundly grateful on that account. Let me add but this, that if the high honour to which, by the efforts of others rather than by my own, I have attained in any part or degree redounds to the credit of this constituency, the fact will add greatly to my happiness, and will, I trust, also add to the strength of that tie

of mutual regard and confidence which has so long bound us together.

Campbell-Bannerman never claimed to be an orator, but few of the great performers could have surpassed him in the simplicity and feeling or the perfection of literary form with which he paid these tributes of gratitude to old friends. The speech which followed plunged at once into the fiscal question, and was a lively fusillade both of Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain.[1] That the fiscal issue should not be shirked but brought into the forefront of the battle from the first day of the election to the last was his determination as well as Mr. Chamberlain's.

From Dunfermline he went to London for a Cabinet, but returned immediately after it to Belmont, where for the next few days he was busy with his final preparations. On January 9, after another rush to London for the Dissolution Council, he issued his election address. It arraigned the outgoing Government in the proper electioneering style for wasted opportunities, broken pledges, and reckless extravagance. 'The period over which we are looking back,' he said, 'presents itself to me as a well-nigh unbroken expanse of mismanagement: of legislation conducted for the benefit of privileged classes and powerful interests; of wars and adventures abroad hastily embarked upon and recklessly pursued. The legacy which the late Government have bequeathed to their successors—and I

[1] A heckler on this occasion elicited his views on Women's Suffrage. Requested to state his views on the question, and also to give his opinion as to what the Liberal Party would do in the matter, he answered: 'Well, we shall—the new Liberal Party—when it comes in after the Election—will have to consider before we can answer the last question; but as to the first I admit it is one which may well be asked of me, because I have given a somewhat uncertain sound on the question for the last two or three years. But I have indicated sufficiently the tendency of my thoughts, and the more I come to close quarters with the social questions which affect the great masses of the people of this country, the more am I driven to the belief that women ought to have the power of expressing their opinions on those subjects and helping in their solution.' Sir Henry was of course aware that not a few of his more important colleagues were at this time opposed to any measure of Woman Suffrage being introduced by the new Government.

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906.

say it in no partisan spirit, but under a full sense of responsibility—is in the main a legacy of embarrassment, an accumulation of public mischief and confusion absolutely appalling in its extent and ramifications.' 'Of South Africa and the promised settlement—the single issue of the last election—it seems enough to remind you that the late Prime Minister now declares to us that, as the result of a policy which involved such sacrifices on the part of the people of this country, South Africa has been reduced to a condition in which loss of prosperity, nay even ruin, can only be avoided by the use of servile labour imported in unlimited quantities from China.'

There followed a passage on finance which, judged by the heroic standards of later times, may seem a little excessive. 'Expenditure and indebtedness have been piled up, the income-tax stands at a shilling, war taxes are continued in peace time, the national credit is impaired, and a heavy depreciation has taken place in securities of every description.' Thus 'industry was burdened, enterprise restricted, workmen thrown out of employment, and the poorer classes straitened still further in their circumstances.' Scornful paragraphs spoke of the 'costly and confused experiments on the Army and the Volunteers,' and of the failure of the 'constructive social policy' of 1895, which, having served its purpose at the polls, was no more heard of. In domestic legislation the record was gloomy. 'Whether we have regard to the late Government's treatment of the supreme national interest of education, or to the licensing question, or to the rating system, we find them approaching and dealing with these matters animated more by a desire to propitiate their powerful friends in the country than to settle problems of national consequence with due regard to the needs, the sentiments, and the convictions of all concerned.' The rest was a careful and elaborate argument on the fiscal question, with the stress, as always, thrown on the anti-social and anti-democratic aspects of the policy known as Tariff Reform. Arguing first that no cause had been shown either in our own experience or that

of other countries for 'resuming the cast-off garments of former times,' he continued :—

I hold that protection is not only bad economy, but think it is an agency at once immoral and oppressive, founded as it is and must be on the exploitation of the community in the interest of favoured trades and financial groups. I hold it to be a corrupting system, because honesty and purity of administration must be driven to the wall if once the principle of taxes for revenue be departed from in favour of the other principle, which I conceive to be of the essence of protection—that, namely, of taxes for private beneficiaries. I hold that a method which, even if it be not deliberately contrived to secure the public endowment of such beneficiaries, including trusts and monopolies, must inevitably operate in that direction, is a most grave menace to freedom and progress, and an outrage on the democratic principle. Last, but not least in order of importance, I hold that any attempt to rivet together the component parts of the Empire with bonds so forged, or to involve it with us in a fiscal war against the world, is not, and cannot come to, good. An empire 'united' on a basis of food taxes would be an empire with a disruptive force at its centre, and that is a prospect with the realisation of which, both in the interests of the Colonies and the mother country, I can have nothing to do.

Let me only add, in case I am told that it is unfair to identify the late Prime Minister, chief of the party of Tariff Reform, with the extreme proposals of his leading colleague, that I understand Mr. Balfour to be agreed in principle with Mr. Chamberlain, and also that the Unionist Party is committed to the programme of tariffs and preferences put forward by Mr. Chamberlain. This being so, I conceive that the minor fiscal policy indicated by Mr. Balfour occupies, in the estimation at any rate of the majority of our opponents, little more than a nominal place in the contest in which we shall shortly be engaged. It is the larger policy, therefore, with which we are confronted and which we are called upon to fight. Our concern in any case is with the results that must flow from the adoption of either of these policies, and not with the question of whether Mr. Balfour conceives himself to be a Free Trader, or a Protectionist, or both, or neither.

I am well aware that our opponents claim to be in a position to establish some kind of indeterminate fiscal limbo, in which the advantages of Free Trade and Protection are to be combined with the disadvantages of neither—a fiscal paradise, perhaps I

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906. ought to call it, where tariffs will bless consumer and producer in equal measure, where the workman will find employment by the exclusion of foreign commodities, and the taxpayer will be relieved by the golden stream of tribute with which the foreigner will still—I know not how—continue to provide him. These fairy stories will be dismissed by serious men, and so, I hope, will be the illusory assurances that the protection imposed will be of no consequence. The man who sets a stone rolling down a steep place may intend that it shall fall slowly and stop before it reaches the foot of the slope, but the stone follows its own course. In the same way the forces that will determine the course and momentum of the tariff movement, once it is started on its way, are beyond the control of the tariff propagandists; and we shall do well to remember that every country which started on the protectionist path set out in a gradual and tentative way, and with the declared intention of executing a strictly moderate tariff policy.

A final paragraph expressed pleasure that 'by renouncing those undesirable characteristics which we formerly detected in their foreign policy, the Unionist Party have made it possible for us to pursue a substantial continuity of policy without departing from the friendly and unprovocative methods which, under Liberal Administrations in the past, have determined the relations of Great Britain with her neighbours.'

So far as policy was concerned, the attack on the new Government could not be effective. The object of getting them into office before the election was to discredit them personally rather than politically. It was supposed that the electors, being at length face to face with an actual Cabinet of Radicals and Little Englanders, headed by the most unpopular man in the country, would suffer a swift revulsion of feeling and swing back to their former allegiance. If this failed, everything failed. The attack, therefore, relied on suggesting that they were not to be trusted on their records or their characters. Mr. Chamberlain declared the new Ministry to be a Home Rule and Little Englander Government, which must exist, if at all, by the Irish vote. Mr. Balfour worked his hardest to create an

Irish scare, but in that was largely countered by the Duke of Devonshire, who declared that if there was danger to the Union it was remote, and lay in the possibility of Unionists becoming identified with Protection. For the rest Mr. Balfour commented sarcastically upon the 'ancient charm' which Disestablishment, the destruction of Voluntary Schools, and the spoliation of licence-holders still possessed for Radical law-makers, and produced a volume of his fiscal writings and speeches from the year 1880 to the year 1905, with a preface which commended it as a body of doctrines acceptable alike to those who held and those who rejected the 'orthodox' Free Trade doctrine. The inability of his opponents to understand his views was, he said in this preface, 'a circumstance of curious and rather pathetic interest.' But whatever may have been the intrinsic value of these speculations, it was improbable that they would affect the public mind at that moment. To most of his countrymen Mr. Balfour seemed still, as Newman said of the Anglican Bishops, to be steering between the Scylla of Aye and the Charybdis of Nay through the channel of no meaning. For elucidation of the fixed creed of the Unionist Party, the country looked not to Mr. Balfour's writings, but to Mr. Chamberlain's speeches, and these continued unabated throughout the election.

III

The Liberal organisations worked the Prime Minister hard at the election, but he found it an exhilarating business and rose with astonishing buoyancy to all demands upon him. For most of the time he remained among his own people, but he paid one flying visit to England, starting from Alyth early in the morning for a meeting at Liverpool in the evening. Next day there were perambulations through the city, a crowded midday meeting at Chester, an afternoon meeting at Wrexham (reached by motor), and finally an evening meeting in a great hall at Shrewsbury with a night journey back to Belmont in prospect. It was more than flesh and blood could stand, and when

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906. at Shrewsbury a slight disturbance arose after he had been speaking for half an hour, he sat down feeling that he had done enough. The next morning he was greatly amused to see flaming newspaper posters announcing that his meeting had been broken up. The rest of the time he was moving about the North—Edinburgh, Glasgow, Crieff, and his own Burghs where no opponent appeared. Electioneering speeches will seldom bear revival, and it may be taken roughly that he developed the themes of his election address with such variations as were suitable to his local and mainly Scottish audiences. His spirits rose as the returns began to come in and were found greatly to exceed his own or any one else's anticipations. The first blood was drawn at Ipswich on Friday, January 12, when two Liberals were returned and a seat gained. The following day Liberal and Labour gained no less than twenty seats in thirty-five borough constituencies. Mr. Balfour was defeated in East Manchester, for which he had sat from the year 1885 onwards, by a majority of nearly 2000; and not a single Unionist survived in the whole of the Manchester and Salford district. Seats were gained at Rochdale, Burnley, Ashton, and in several West Riding constituencies, and of the two seats polled in London one showed a Liberal gain and the other a largely increased Liberal majority.

These first results surpassed the wildest hopes of Liberal partisans, and the new Prime Minister had a rich theme when he appeared at Glasgow on the evening of Monday the 16th. 'What a moment it is,' he exclaimed, 'at which we have met! What a week is that we are living in! Manœuvres and strategies are all over now! The hand to conflict is engaged; let the best men win.' Deafening cheers greeted every sentence: the audience were wild with excitement and enthusiasm. 'We Liberals,' he went on, 'have passed through dark and dreary days, when we seemed to be enshrouded and enwrapped in a cloud of depression, but we have never allowed it to be a cloud of despair. We have watched through weary years and months the steady growth in the strength of our cause in the country;

we have chafed and fretted at the shifts and devices by which our opponents have attempted to decline battle, to postpone the day of reckoning, and to avoid the straightforward game in political warfare; and now, when they could no longer refuse to face the judgment of the country, we have seen the result of the first day of the fight. Can the oldest man among you remember anything like it? Everywhere, east and west, north and south, the same tale is told.' In Manchester, 'the chosen, familiar, and political home of the leader of the party of the late Government, the Unionist ship has foundered with all hands, and even the captain, to his credit be it said, went down with her.' Retaliation as a policy was 'drowned in the whirlpool of East Manchester.' Now for the first time he said confidently that the Government looked for 'a big majority.' A little rash, said some discreet persons, on the strength of one day's pollings. But he had always been confident and he was quite sure now.

As was the first day so were the others in varying degrees. The present generation will know no more the thrills and pains, exultations and depressions, of the long-drawn-out conflicts of these times. But seldom in any election had the later results belied the earlier, and all through the week the tale of Unionist disasters continued in the boroughs and was then taken up by the counties. The safest Tory seats could not be counted upon; great majorities were swept away like sand-castles before the rising tide which swept over London as over Scotland, and even invaded the irreclaimable Home Counties. Ministers went down before it, and the great, wise, and eminent fared no better than the humble and meek. Mr. Gerald Balfour shared his brother's fate at Leeds; Mr. Lyttelton was rejected by Leamington, Mr. Brodrick by Guildford, Sir William Hart Dyke by Dartford; and Mr. Chaplin found an unknown Labour candidate preferred to him at Sleaford. Constituencies confidently reckoned upon by Tariff Reformers to yield to their blandishments were as emphatic in their refusal as the rest of the country. Birmingham alone

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906.

stood solid and four-square, and by its fidelity in this evil time paid Mr. Chamberlain the highest tribute of the many that he had received from his own people in the course of his long career.

With this cheering news pouring in upon him every night and every morning, Campbell-Bannerman's electioneering was an easy business. Five years before he had gone over the same ground fighting against desperate odds, beating up his reserves, putting the best face on a bad business, doubtful perhaps whether his coming would be a help or a hurt to the candidate for whom he was pleading. Now he was welcomed everywhere as the man whose hour was come, the conquering Scot who was reaping the reward of the grit and courage of his race. The greetings he had from his countrymen were very much more than the ebullitions of an electioneering crowd. Mingled with them, and especially among his own constituents, were a deep affection and pride in the man who had weathered without bending to the storm, and was emerging unscathed from the obloquy and animosity which had been his portion in past years. He took it all with a boyish pleasure which he was at no pains to conceal. Many who were present remember vividly the evening at Glasgow in the middle of the election (Jan. 16), when, after speech-making, he was the guest of the Liberal Club at supper. He said the usual few words at the end of the meal, and then, settling down in his chair, began reading out the election results which were beginning to come in. He gave out not only the names and figures but—reporters being absent—a running commentary on the candidates and reflections on the constituencies, in a homely, caustic style, with a broad Scotch accent when the occasion called for it—'He's a guid lad, but na sound on the land'—so rollicking and jolly that the laughter and cheering grew uproarious as the record of victories and the dry comments on them flowed on.

The climax of his Scottish campaign was reached at Inverness on a bitter day in January. The crowds at the station, at the meetings, and in the streets dropped

all pretence at restraint, and it was no easy matter getting the Prime Minister away from the station behind a wedge of purple-faced pipers and police. After the evening meeting they came flooding outside the hotel for 'another word from C.-B.' Some spirit of mischief had contrived that Mr. Balfour should arrive on the same day, at the same hour, to support the Unionist candidate, Sir Robert Finlay, and presently the two leaders were haranguing their respective supporters in halls on opposite sides of the same square. To the people of Inverness it seemed as if their city had been chosen by the higher powers as the arena for the supreme effort in the contest, and they entered with zest into the occasion. For once Campbell-Bannerman raised his voice to a rather shrill pitch, and he repudiated with some acerbity a suggestion of Mr. Balfour's that he had entered into a bargain with Mr. Redmond which he was concealing from the country :—

I see that Mr. Balfour has displayed a charming solicitude about me. He seems to think that I am as much afraid of my friends as he was of his. He says of me that I am in a thorough quandary about Ireland. 'He has made,' says Mr. Balfour, 'some sort of bargain with Mr. Redmond. He told us at the Albert Hall about three weeks ago that he had nothing to conceal. Well, he concealed that particular transaction. No one doubts that there is such an arrangement, though the terms of it may be a perplexity to most of us, and are unquestionably a perplexity to me,' and further on : 'What is the instalment of reform leading towards that state of things which the Prime Minister has promised Mr. Redmond, and for which Mr. Redmond in exchange has promised the support of the Nationalist Party in Ireland ?' I have a very plain way of disposing of that. There is no foundation from beginning to end for the whole story. And I go further, and say that for a man of his authority to go to a great constituency on the eve of the poll and promulgate a story like this without the slightest authority—I defy him to produce any—to make such a statement as deliberately as if he knew it was true is nothing short of a scandal. What is it he rests on ? Is it the mere gossip of clubs, mere pot-house babble ? What is the source of it ? Is it allowable for a public man of his authority, fresh from the position of Prime Minister of this country, to make

a statement of this sort in these positive terms without an atom of truth? I stand here and say in reply that there is not an atom of foundation in the whole story. There is no mystery. There are no secrets. There are, however, solid grounds of agreement between the Liberals and the Irish Nationalists. I can name three of them. The first is, or was, the earnest desire to get rid of Mr. Balfour and his Government. The next is the equally earnest desire to improve the administration of Ireland; and the third is the belief that in Ireland, as in every other country throughout the King's dominions, self-government is the best and safest and healthiest basis on which a community can rest. Beyond these three points of agreement we need not go; and how can the Unionists, forsooth! deny that self-government is good for the country when they themselves gave in local county affairs self-government to Ireland? How can they deny the Irish people are worthy to be trusted when they themselves have promised 120 millions of British credit in order to oust the landlords from their property and instal the tenants? No; there is no compact and there is no secret. . . .

. . . Mr. Balfour has come down from the mountains of Manchester to instruct you whom to send to Parliament. Well, he ought to be a pretty good judge. I do not know that he is a good judge of getting into Parliament, but he is a very good judge of getting out. I wish to speak with all respect of him, but when he pulls me over the harrow, or under the harrow, and attributes everything to me with no foundation in fact, even a worm will turn. I think in the circumstances in which he stands he might at least keep a civil tongue in his mouth.

This was a departure from his usual style and somewhat different from the vein in which a few days earlier he had complimented the 'captain' on going down with his ship at Manchester. It was unlike him to triumph over any opponent in the moment of victory, but the passage about the 'harrow' was the spontaneous outburst of pent-up feelings. He had suffered in patience and for a great many years attacks which he thought deliberately intended to damage him in the public esteem as well as to combat his opinions, and he was determined to stand them no longer. As Prime Minister he felt himself under a certain obligation to defend his own authority and dignity against the

'baiting' to which in the previous years he had been exposed.

His last electioneering speech was made at Larbert on the 22nd, and here, with the all-but-completed returns before him, he struck a sober note. 'The course which events had taken added enormously,' he said, to the responsibility which he and his friends had incurred by undertaking the administration of the affairs of the country. It was hard enough to undertake that duty with the prospect of something like an evenly balanced distribution of power; but when they had such an opportunity, either for good or evil, as was offered by that tremendous disproportion of power, the electors would see that their sense of responsibility was immensely increased. He hoped that whatever they did they would not imitate the Government they had succeeded, and that they would not treat the Opposition with contempt. 'They would not,' he added, 'be so full of egotism and vanity as to imagine that they were the only people on the face of the earth who were capable of controlling the affairs and guiding the policy of a great Empire, and they would remember that it was necessary to look upon questions from all sides and not merely from the side which might be most advantageous to the Government to which they belonged.'

It was, indeed, as he said in this speech, a 'tremendous disproportion of power.' Mr. Chamberlain's idea of a Radical and Little-England Government 'existing, if at all, on the Irish vote' had completely gone by the board, and with it his hope that the Tariff Reformers would be strong enough to control the House of Commons. The Liberals alone, without Irish or Labour, were 377 strong, to an Opposition total of 157, including Chamberlainites (109), Balfourites (32), and Unionist Free Fooders (11).[1]

The Irish were their usual complement of 83, and Labour mustered 53, of whom 24 were allied to the Liberal Party, the remaining 29 being nominees of the Labour

[1] These subdivisions are taken from an article in the *Times* of Jan. 30, 1906.

Representation Committee, and pledged to sit and vote as an independent party. The Liberals and their usual allies were thus 513 out of a total of 670, and even if both their allies, Labour and Irish, simultaneously turned against them, they still had a clear majority of 132, not counting Unionist Free Fooders. It was, in the American expression, a veritable landslide, and as surprising in its magnitude to the Government as to its opponents. The new Parliament was an immense novelty. Scores of familiar figures had vanished; hundreds of raw and unknown men had come upon the scene. Young men sent to fight forlorn hopes, without the slightest expectation of winning, found themselves swept into the House of Commons and committed to a parliamentary career. Supporters of despised causes, leaders of forlorn hopes, extremists of all patterns had gained their footing and came bearing their various banners. It was of course immensely satisfactory, but looking at this variegated host and noting the signs of its independence and its zeal and its inexperience, old parliamentary hands asked a little anxiously what it might do and whether any leadership would be equal to it.

IV

But one feature at all events was most promising. The completeness of the Liberal victory had been largely due to the co-operation between the Liberal and Labour Parties. This resulted from a mutual desire for an understanding which had been manifested some two years before Mr. Balfour's resignation, and had been made operative by goodwill and patient hard work on the part of the Chief Whip, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, on the one side and the Labour leaders on the other. The latter no doubt saw, and saw rightly, that co-operation meant a great increase in their parliamentary strength; and in the same way Liberals stood to gain by the avoidance of three-cornered fights and the improved chances of their candidates in other constituencies where in default of agreed common action many voters would have been hostile or indifferent.

The Conservative Government was the common objective of both, but as regards policy there was no compact or bargain. The understanding was limited to an agreement for mutual assistance. Three-cornered fights were to be avoided wherever possible. When, for local reasons, Liberals and Labour insisted on running opposing candidates, such contests were to be accepted as inevitable, and to be fought without bitterness and without impairing the general sense of co-operation. In concert with local leaders in the constituencies, relative claims to candidatures were considered in detail and settled. The understanding was honourably observed by both parties, and there was no trouble from first to last.

Liberal policy had been fully and publicly stated by Campbell-Bannerman, and no charge was subsequently made that the Liberal Government had not fulfilled its promises on social reform. Confidence in Campbell-Bannerman and belief in the seriousness of his intentions no doubt contributed largely to this result. Even the extremest of Labour leaders were disposed to except him when they attacked the Liberal Government. 'I have a disgust for party newspaper eulogies of Ministers or coming men,' wrote Mr. Keir Hardie in the *Labour Leader* in January 1907, 'but in common fairness I must say Sir Henry has earned, and fully deserves, all the praise that is heaped upon him. He seems to be mellowing with age, and really desirous of effecting some useful legislation. Of one thing I have convinced myself—that where the Liberal Party falls short of its promises, the blame will not rest with C.-B.' To be credited with the intention of 'effecting some useful legislation' was high praise from Mr. Keir Hardie.

As Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman always used his influence to prevent recrimination between Liberal and Labour, and he was not a little annoyed when, in the autumn of 1906, the Master of Elibank, then a Junior Whip, appeared to be taking the field against Labour in a series of speeches in Scotland. 'Great flutter among my colleagues,' he

CHAP. XXVIII. 1905-1906.

reports to the Chief Whip, 'on seeing that the irrepressible Elibank is going to make a speech at Edinburgh on the 17th [Sept.]. I flutter myself. . . . A third speech would confirm the impression that he has my authority for what he says.' From the moment that he accepted office, it was one of the fixed points in his policy that Liberal and Labour should be kept together.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE GOAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

A Royal Breeze — Chinese Labour — A Hitch — Legal Opinions—An Amended Announcement—Opinion in South Africa—The End of the Ordinance—The Lyttelton Constitution and its History—A Sharp Challenge—Campbell-Bannerman's Determination—The Question of Principle—An Act of Faith—Two Ways of Security—The Crucial Decision—' A Magnificent Piece of Work '—The Ridgeway Commission—Lord Selborne's Attitude—The Government Bill—A Heated Debate—Campbell-Bannerman's Achievement.

CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN gave himself two days' rest at Belmont after his last electioneering speech, then came by night to London on the 26th to keep a ' dine and sleep ' engagement at Windsor. The Court was supposed to be not a little perturbed at the great upheaval, but King Edward kept a perfect constitutional composure through it all. The appearance of ' C.-B.' as Prime Minister, even with the enormous Radical majority that was now behind him, had none of the terrors for him that the re-appearance of Mr. Gladstone had had for his mother in 1880. He had a strong personal liking for the new Prime Minister and great trust in his good sense. To keep on terms with the Liberal Party, and, so far as he could, correct the drift of the Court in the opposite direction, had been one of his guiding principles as Heir Apparent, and he took it as an inevitable and healthy part of the play of politics that the Liberal Party should have its chance and be treated with strict impartiality by the Crown.

One little score he had permitted himself during the elections :—

CHATSWORTH, *June* 7, 1906.

The King wishes to call Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's attention to the Rt. Honble. John Burns, President of the Local

CHAP. XXIX. 1906.

Government Board and a Cabinet Minister's address to his constituents in which, amongst various subjects, he states that he is in favour of the abolition of the House of Lords.

As Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman has recently recommended several prominent members of the House of Commons to be peers, the King is somewhat surprised that a member of the Cabinet should have made this declaration EDWARD R.

Lord Tweedmouth intervened as mediator, but what exactly he said is not recorded. Anyhow the erring Minister confirmed it in a letter to Lord Knollys, and enclosed a newspaper cutting to prove that he 'only meant the House of Lords' when he spoke as he had done in a passage that came under the royal eye of 'the abolition of all hereditary authorities.' The incident was closed with an expression of regret from the Prime Minister himself, who attributed 'the error' . . . 'solely to the inexperience in official responsibility of the Minister concerned.'

The King, naturally, was anxious that his Ministers should not move too fast, and advised that Lord Selborne, then High Commissioner in South Africa, should be consulted both about Chinese Labour and the Constitution for the Transvaal. Lord Elgin had anticipated this suggestion, and throughout the month of December had been constantly in communication with Lord Selborne upon the first of these subjects. In the course of these communications an unexpected difficulty had presented itself which made the Prime Minister's promise to 'stop forthwith the recruitment and embarkation of Chinese coolies' appear somewhat rash. At various dates between November 12 and 18, licences had been issued for the importation of no less than 14,700 fresh coolies. The issuing of these licences had been decided on at a meeting between the Superintendent of Foreign Labour and the Chamber of Mines, held on October 26—a date which disposes of the belief, widely current at the time, that the Home Government, foreseeing its own departure from the scene, had deliberately intended to make difficulties for their successors, and to provide entrenchments for the mine-owners. But the question still remained, what was

to be done about these licences, licences for men who might be said to have been recruited before the Government came into office, but who had certainly got to be 'embarked' and for whose 'embarkation' ships were at the very moment being chartered?

The question was put to the Law Officers at home and by Lord Selborne to the Attorney-General of the Transvaal, Sir Richard Solomon. The answer of all was the same. The licence could legally be cancelled for breach of regulations or conditions by the holders, but not for any other cause. 'There is no regulation in force,' said Sir Richard, 'nor in my opinion could any such be now framed, to give the Lieut.-Governor power to revoke a licence at will. Such a regulation would, in my opinion, be *ultra vires* and unreasonable, and would be specially unreasonable when made to apply to a licence issued before the promulgation of such regulation.' The same authority was, however, of opinion that when a licence had been signed but not issued, the Lieut.-Governor was not under obligation to issue it, and that the Government was, therefore, free to get in the small number (about 3000) of unissued licences; but Lord Selborne was of opinion that this case could not fairly be treated differently from the others in justice to the parties concerned. Asked whether the mine-owners would of their own free will stop the importation, he replied that his impression was that they would be most unwilling since they had recently gone to enormous expense in development work, most of which would be thrown away if they did not get a labour supply sufficient to make production keep pace with development. It certainly was not probable that the mine-owners would make pecuniary sacrifices to help the new Government.

It was evident, therefore, that though recruitment might be stopped, the embarkation of men already recruited could not be prevented without legislation. The entire Cabinet, especially the lawyers, were opposed to undertaking legislation. 'It would rouse a tremendous hubbub both here and there,' wrote Mr. Asquith, 'it would involve the British

CHAP. XXIX. 1906. taxpayer (who is without available funds) in indefinitely large claims for compensation, and would not be necessary to fulfil your pledge. The whole responsibility for the addition to the number ought to be thrown on the late Government.' 'We can state with absolute accuracy,' said the Colonial Secretary (Lord Elgin), 'that we do interfere immediately the law enables us to do so, and that for all else the late Government is responsible. And if we couple this with some such provision as will abolish the charge of slavery, our whole policy becomes coherent.' The question came before the pre-election Cabinet of January 3, which decided that the existing licences must stand and the ultimate decision about the 47,000 coolies, who would then be in the Rand, be left until the new Transvaal Constitution was established. In the meantime it was agreed that the situation should be explained to the public, lest it should be said afterwards that the country had been misled by the Prime Minister's Albert Hall promise. The word 'forthwith' in that speech had now to be interpreted as applying to further embarkations when those already authorised were exhausted.

Though somewhat loth to part with the idea of a clean cut from the day that he took office, Campbell-Bannerman acquiesced in this decision, and explained the circumstances fully in his Liverpool speech on January 9. Throughout the election the question of Chinese Labour continued to be the subject of bitter controversy, and Unionists complained that the attacks on them were outrageous and unfair. Sweet reasonableness was certainly not a characteristic of public controversy in any public discussion of South African questions whether in 1900 or 1906, and it must freely be admitted that in the latter year the Radical electioneerer took pleasure in the thought that he was 'getting some of his own back' for what he had suffered in the former. Official speakers walked more warily on this subject, and, as Mr. Birrell was afterwards able to demonstrate to the House of Commons, the authorised campaign literature contained nothing to which exception could fairly be taken. The

Prime Minister himself, though holding strong views, had always been careful to define exactly what he meant. 'I have spoken of it in two phrases,' he told the House of Commons. 'I have said that it was tainted with slavery, and I repeat that. I have said that it had many of the characteristics of slavery, and I repeat that. Beyond that I have never gone.' But other violent denunciations could be quoted which exposed the Government to the retort that in shrinking from legislation to cancel the licences and return the coolies, it was conniving at crime and slavery; and this could only be met by appealing to amendments in the Ordinance which, as the Government alleged, removed the taint of slavery. When the subject came to be debated in the House on February 22, Mr. Wyndham ridiculed these 'half-hearted palliatives,' and not a few Radicals were for the complete abolition of the Ordinance, which was vehemently advocated by Dr. Macnamara and Mr. Belloc, the latter of whom wished the coolies to be deported at the mine-owners' expense. Mr. Chamberlain in that debate brought an immediate contradiction from Campbell-Bannerman by suggesting that the Government had, before deciding, 'consulted the so-called Rand magnates of Park Lane.' No one was less likely than the Prime Minister to go to Park Lane for guidance on any question touching South Africa.

It may be added that before the year was out all parties, including the mine-owners, had serious reasons for doubting whether the importation of the 50,000 Chinese had not been a gross error of policy, apart altogether from the questions of principle which it raised. Many crimes of violence were reported among the coolies during the summer and winter, and the herding of vast numbers of celibate men—or men unaccompanied by their wives and families—led inevitably to the unnatural vice, the disclosure of which in the report of a Transvaal official (Mr. Blackwell) gravely disturbed South Africa and led to heated debates in the British Parliament during the winter sitting. The Government, having pledged themselves to leave the ultimate settlement

CHAP. XXIX. 1906.

of this question to the Transvaal Responsible Government, could do nothing more than increase the police precautions and speed up the repatriation of undesirables; but the Radical wing of their party continued to protest against what they considered to be the feeble handling of this subject, and the Prime Minister needed all his influence with them to keep their protests within bounds. His speeches[1] show that he was far from easy in his own mind at the delay, but by the summer of 1906 South African opinion was moving slowly but steadily against the Chinese experiment, and he could afford to wait. The end came in June 1907, when General Botha, who was now Prime Minister, announced to the Transvaal Assembly that the Labour Ordinance would not be re-enacted and that the Chinese would be sent home immediately on the expiry of their contracts (June 17). It was alleged at the time that Botha, who had just returned from a visit to London for the Imperial Conference, had been bribed to do this by the Imperial Government, which had guaranteed a Transvaal loan of £5,000,000. It is undoubtedly the fact that the guaranteeing of this loan released him from dependence on the financial houses, which might otherwise have made the retention of the Ordinance a condition of their support, but there is no substance in the idea that he needed bribing to undertake this action. In 1905, when Sir Arthur Lawley, the then Governor of the Transvaal, had cabled home a statement, which was read in the House of Commons, that the Transvaal people were in favour of the Chinese policy, Botha and the Boer leaders drew up a strong letter[2] which they insisted on being cabled to London, declaring that, if they were any judges of Transvaal opinion, the 'overwhelming majority' were 'unalterably opposed to it.' There is no reason to suppose that Botha wavered in this view, and in any case it had been definitely laid down in the Letters Patent granting Responsible Government that within a year of the meeting of the Transvaal Legislature the

[1] See especially House of Commons, March 21.

[2] See *General Botha*, by Harold Spender, p. 167. (Constable: 1916.)

Ordinance was to be 'repealed and to cease to have effect.'[1]

II

There was fortunately more important work for South Africa awaiting the new Government than the repatriation of Chinese coolies. If there was anything which Campbell-Bannerman was pledged to and which he considered his first and greatest task, it was to complete the policy of reconciliation which from the beginning of the South African War and through every stage of it he had preached to the British people. I have pointed out that in the very first year of the war he made up his mind that the annexation of the Boer Republic would be its inevitable outcome, and that the duty of the Liberal Party was, therefore, not to waste itself in a vain attempt to maintain the old dualism but to see that annexation was followed as quickly as possible by free and responsible Government, and that there should be no intermediary stage which might postpone or evade that conclusion. The Lyttelton Constitution for the Transvaal promulgated in March of the previous year was a sharp challenge to this point of view, and he felt it incumbent on him to meet it at once.

But in order to explain the situation which now presented itself to the Government, a brief summary is needed of the

[1] An old resident in South Africa supplies a note on some of the reasons for the strong objection which the Boers took to the Chinese. The coolies, he says, had been recruited in great haste and included a good many desperate characters. It was said at the time that one Chinese governor had cleared his gaols and sent his prisoners to the Rand (while continuing to draw money for their maintenance). In spite of the regulation providing for their return to China, some of the coolies started to walk home, going towards where the sun rose. While the mealie crop lasted they could feed themselves and hide in the day, but when it gave out they starved and would raid a farmhouse and murder all in it. The terror was so bad that two columns of South African constabulary were stationed at the east end of the Rand and patrolled beyond. The Boers, whose farms are far apart, would congregate in a central farmhouse and mount a sentry. The position was so dangerous at one time that the Executive warned the mine-owners that, if another murder took place, they would have to repatriate the Chinamen.

CHAP. XXIX. 1906.

course of events in South Africa during the previous two years. From the end of the war onwards the Transvaal and Orange River Colony had been administered as Crown Colonies, but the years had by no means been unfruitful. Lord Milner, with the aid of a group of clever young men brought out from home, whom the Colonists promptly nicknamed the 'Kindergarten,' had applied himself energetically to 'reconstruction,' and General Botha and his Boer colleagues, though refusing Lord Milner's invitation to join his Legislative Council, had also been hard at work restoring the country and re-establishing the Boers on their farms. The relations between British and Boers were correct and not unfriendly, but the Boers politely declined to take any official part in the administration until full Responsible Government was established. Admirable as Lord Milner's effort was in many respects, it inevitably encountered criticism from British as well as Dutch, and before the year 1904 was far advanced there were murmurs in all parties that it was too expensive and bureaucratic. The introduction of Chinese Labour and the differences of opinion which arose about it added to the difficulties ; and before the end of 1904 it had become evident to all parties that serious trouble would follow if the Crown Colony system were prolonged. Mr. Balfour's Government now decided that the time had come to take a cautious step forward. Accordingly, on March 31, 1905, 'Letters Patent and Order in Council providing for constitutional changes in the Transvaal' were promulgated, and in a covering despatch of the same date, the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Alfred Lyttelton, launched his plan for a new Constitution conferring 'Representative Government.' About the same time Lord Milner returned home, and his place as High Commissioner was taken by Lord Selborne.

Mr. Lyttelton proposed to create a Legislative Chamber for the Transvaal but not for the Orange River Colony, the circumstances of which were said to be less urgent. The Transvaal Assembly was to consist of the Lieut.-Governor and not less than six and not more than nine official

members, and not less than thirty and not more than thirty-five elected members. The official members were to be persons holding office under the Government of the Colony and members of the Executive Council, in whose hands all executive responsibility was to remain. The elected members were to be chosen by voters with a property qualification (land and premises of a value of £100 or annual value of £10), grouped in districts by Commissioners to be appointed by the Lieut.-Governor. The Assembly was to 'make laws required for the peace, order, and good government of the Colony,' but the Governor was to have the right either of assenting to those laws or 'reserving them for the signification of the Royal pleasure.' A reserved law was to have no validity until the Royal pleasure was known, and to be null and void if disallowed. In regard to finance the Assembly was not to have the power of appropriating any part of the revenue of the Colony or imposing any rate, tax, or duty unless 'such law, vote, or resolution had been first recommended to the Assembly by message of the Governor'; and no part of the revenue of the Colony was to be issued except under authority given by the Lieut.-Governor directed to the Colonial Treasurer. The official language of the Assembly was to be English, though Dutch might be spoken with the permission of the President.

The elective Assembly, in fact, was to have no power except to pass laws subject to the right of the Governor to reserve them for the veto of the Home Government. All else, including the power of the purse, remained with the Governor and his Executive Council. This, in Mr. Lyttelton's opinion, was as much as 'prudent and sensible men,' whether in South Africa or other parts of the British Empire, could be expected to approve, and it was strictly in line with the Vereeniging Treaty which spoke of 'Representative institutions leading up to self-government.' Mr. Lyttelton argued that Responsible Government must be party government, and that party government would in the circumstances of the Transvaal inevitably be racial government; and, though this conclusion was not stated, his meaning was

CHAP. XXIX. 1906. inferred to be that it would almost certainly be Boer Government, to the destruction of what Great Britain had at great cost and sacrifice won in the war.

This was by no means a unanimous opinion even in Government circles at this time. Sir Richard Solomon, the Transvaal Attorney-General, entered a strong remonstrance and argued powerfully that the proposed Constitution would prove unworkable in practice and probably bring the Executive into dangerous collision with the Assembly. From the beginning the scheme encountered the unanimous opposition of the Boers and obtained only a lukewarm support from the British, who were by no means enamoured of Downing Street Government. Not a few British who had lived in Natal under a similar form of government to that now proposed for the Transvaal commented rather grimly on Mr. Lyttelton's claim that this system had proved to be a 'school for self-government' in that Colony. If a school, it was one from which they had been heartily glad to be released. Within a few weeks there were two Associations powerfully agitating against the Lyttelton scheme, the Boer 'Het Volk' or People's Union, which said frankly that they regarded it as a betrayal of the Vereeniging pledge, and a 'Responsible Government Association,' composed mainly of British who took their stand on the democratic principle. At the end of the year these organisations were countered by others which now protested against the threatened betrayal of British interests by the Liberal Government which had come into power, but by this time it was generally recognised even on the British side that the Lyttelton half-way house could not be a solution of the problem. From this time forward the controversy shifted from the nature of the constitution to the basis of representation, the British demanding the principle of 'one vote one value' which entitled the Rand to half the representation of the Colony, and the Boers favouring a distribution of seats which would have given Pretoria and the rural areas a majority.

Here undoubtedly were testing questions which raised

the Liberal principle in its simplest and most challenging form. To the great majority of British Unionists and to an immense number of outside observers in Europe, it seemed very near an act of madness to let the Boers have the opportunity of 'winning back by the ballot-box what they had lost in the war.' After sacrificing 30,000 lives and spending two hundred and fifty millions of money in conquering the Boer States, were we seriously, they asked, proposing to retire from the scene and hand back the reins to a Boer Government? After all the evidence we had had of Boer slimness and Boer hostility, and in spite of the protests of our own people, who saw themselves betrayed and delivered back into the hands of their oppressors? It was all very well to take off your hat to democracy, but to do this within three years of a great war, when passions were still smouldering and the enemy was manifestly waiting for his revenge, was quixotic folly and the sacrifice of great interests to the pedantry of Liberalism. The Europeans who had taken a malicious pleasure in the difficulties of the British Army in South Africa now said that the British people were quite mad.

Campbell-Bannerman's answer was an act of faith. Follow the guiding principle which had never yet failed the British Empire in its dealings with white people, look to the plain meaning of the Vereeniging Treaty, carry it out boldly and faithfully and without waiting till the act had lost its grace, and you would win security in South Africa as elsewhere. Otherwise you would repeat the error of 1880, expose yourself again to the charge of broken faith, and make the British-Boer feud perpetual and unappeasable until one day the Boer would find his opportunity in Britain's difficulty. Here on a small scale was the whole argument with its imperative alternatives which opened up before Europe after the Great War. 'Security' by trust and conciliation or by force and ascendancy? Then, as later, the British argument was a paradox leading to a conclusion which is still foolishness to the Gentiles, but when ten years later a Boer Prime Minister took it into his own hands to suppress

CHAP. a Dutch rebellion and fought side by side with the British Empire against its European enemies, the whole world judged that it had been splendidly justified.

III

At the end of the year 1905 the Lyttelton Constitution still awaited the completion of the preliminary work of delimiting the constituencies and registering the voters. Campbell-Bannerman was for sweeping it all away and proceeding at once to Responsible Government. Other more cautious spirits were for letting it go forward for a time and grafting on to it at a later stage the amendments which would convert it into Responsible Government. Campbell-Bannerman had no doubts. He said flatly that the one plan was right and the other wrong, and refused to be involved in any legal or constitutional argument which favoured the more cautious procedure. To stand by and let this Constitution, which in Opposition they had denounced as a sham, be solemnly set up on the chance that it would be developed afterwards into something different would be to stultify themselves, to throw doubts on their own good faith, and to miss the golden opportunity which came to the new Government of reconciling South Africa to the Empire. The crucial decision was taken on February 8, when, according to a colleague, the Prime Minister made one of the most impressive appeals that had ever been heard in a Cabinet. Arguing as always for the simple and direct approach to a great act of policy, and sweeping aside all minor objections, he carried the Cabinet unanimously to the decision that he desired. There was apparently at one moment risk of a different decision, for Mr. Lloyd George wrote on the following day: 'I hope you will not regard it as presumptuous of me if I congratulate you on the way you saved the Government from inevitable disaster yesterday. It was a magnificent piece of work.' Another colleague, Lord Carrington, was no less enthusiastic: 'You must allow me to congratulate you on having so magnificently saved the South African situation to-day. The party would have been in arms if we

had capitulated to Lyttelton and the mine-owners—and you pulled us through entirely and alone.' At the next Cabinet (Feb. 13) it was formally decided to cancel the Letters Patent for the Lyttelton Constitution and to send out immediately a Committee to the Transvaal to inquire into and report on the proper method of representation on the basis of manhood suffrage.

Sir Joseph West Ridgeway was appointed Chairman of this Committee, the other members of which were Lord Sandhurst, Sir Francis Hopwood (now Lord Southborough), and Col. Sir D. Alexander Johnston. The last-named was a former Director-General of Ordnance Survey and had been Chairman of the Redistribution Committee appointed for this country in 1905. He acted mainly as an expert on Redistribution and devoted himself to the delimitation of constituencies. The Committee, after doing some preliminary work in London, started for South Africa on April 7 and remained there for three months. At first it found the Boers sceptical and aloof. They had not realised what had taken place in England and seemed to think that those emissaries from London had come out merely to fix the Lyttelton Constitution upon them. General Botha accepted the invitation to confer with them, but his approach was cautious and non-committal. He insisted on speaking Dutch and brought General Smuts with him as interpreter. But all this changed rapidly as soon as the ice was broken and the Boers understood the real intentions of the British Government. General Botha fell into English and became at once the moderate and conciliatory statesman, seeking to smooth difficulties and to make the position as acceptable as possible to the British in the Transvaal. The British on their side showed the same excellent temper, and within a short time the two parties were amicably discussing not questions of principle but simply how many seats should be treated as Dutch, how many British, and how many doubtful in the proposed delimitation of constituencies.

This was promising, but there remained one considerable obstacle, namely, the High Commissioner, who was

CHAP. XXIX. 1906.

seriously disturbed to find the British giving way on what he deemed to be the point of principle. Lord Selborne, who had been appointed by Mr. Balfour's Government, had inevitably a strong bias in favour of the Lyttelton Constitution, and he considered the country unripe for Responsible Government. Holding these views he acted on them quite straightforwardly, and on May 23 he telegraphed to Lord Elgin that, having been consulted by the 'Responsible Association' and the 'Progressives,' he had advised them against concurring in a compromise which the Commission had arranged between them and the Boers, and to which both these parties had practically agreed, and had told them to 'fix their principles and adhere to them and take the consequences.' The Cabinet were greatly annoyed, and some of its members were for recalling Lord Selborne forthwith, but Lord Elgin saw great advantage in retaining him during the period of transition, and shrank from arousing the hostility of the Progressives by any sensational stroke at his expense. In the end the Cabinet contented themselves with instructing Lord Elgin to communicate to him, 'with all possible respect and consideration,' that he had exceeded his duty as High Commissioner, and that, while he was quite right to hear what all parties might say, he ought not to have interfered to prejudice or upset a harmonious settlement, but should have reported what he heard to the Cabinet. A telegraphic communication to this effect was followed up later by a despatch in which Lord Selborne was directed in future to use all his influence to bring about an amicable settlement.

The situation improved in the last week of May, and at the end of the month Lord Selborne and Sir West Ridgeway reported in a joint telegram that a satisfactory settlement was in sight. There had been much hard bargaining, but both parties continued to be conciliatory and finally came to terms upon a scheme which Lord Selborne approved.[1]

[1] It was generally believed by all parties at this time that this scheme would make a British majority certain at the first election. The Boer leaders were not at all averse to this, and said frankly that they would far

There was nothing binding in this agreement, but it was sufficient for the Home Government to work upon. From beginning to end of the negotiations no word was said about the Lyttelton Constitution, which by that agreement was regarded as dead. The Committee were back in London on July 14, having achieved what many people in this country had thought to be an impossibility. With the material thus provided in their hands, the Cabinet at once went to work to lay down the main provisions of the new Constitution; and Mr. Winston Churchill, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, who had shown great energy and ability in defending the Government policy through all its stages, explained them to the House of Commons on July 30. CHAP. XXIX. ÆT. 96.

This was smart work which well justified the decision taken by the Cabinet in February. As it turned out, the British in the Transvaal had no affection for the Lyttelton Constitution, and the clear intimation that the Cabinet intended to go forward at once to Responsible Government proved a powerful incentive to all parties to accept in a practical spirit what was evidently tantamount to an accomplished fact. The Government, as Mr. Churchill explained, proposed to proceed on the principle of manhood suffrage with a six months' residential qualification and 'one vote one value' with the allotment of seats (giving 34 to the Rand, 6 to the Pretoria District, and 29 to the rest of the Colony) arranged by the Ridgeway Commission. A second Chamber of fifteen nominated by the Crown was to be set up provisionally for the first Parliament and arrangements made for making it elective afterwards. The natives were excluded, since the Treaty of Vereeniging bound us not to enfranchise them in advance of self-government, but legislation imposing disabilities on them was to be reserved for approval by the Secretary of State for the

rather that the British had the opportunity of putting things in order than that they should be called upon to form a Government themselves. When the election came, however, the desire of the Boers to escape the responsibility was frustrated by the action of British voters who voted for Dutch candidates in constituencies marked with the Union Jack.

CHAP. XXIX. 1906.

Colonies. Provision, Mr. Churchill added, would be made for terminating the Chinese Labour Ordinance within a reasonable time, and a clause was to be inserted in the Constitution declaring specifically that no law imposing 'any condition of service or residence of a servile character' would be assented to by the Crown, and that any legislation imposing disabilities on natives not imposed on Europeans or affecting the alienation of native land would be reserved for Crown sanction. With these reservations, all the liberties of a self-governing Colony were to be granted to the Transvaal.

IV

South Africa received these announcements calmly, but not so the Opposition at home. The debate in the House (July 31) was long and excited; Mr. Lyttelton and Mr. Arnold Forster vied with each other in gloomy vaticinations, and Mr. Balfour denounced the Government in the most vehement language for what he termed 'a dangerous, audacious, and reckless experiment.' So prolonged was this Opposition invective that Campbell-Bannerman was left only one minute to reply before the debate automatically closed. He used it to say that he had 'never, in the whole of his parliamentary career, listened to a more unworthy, provocative, and mischievous speech than Mr. Balfour's,' but at that point his voice was drowned in a protesting clamour from the opposite benches, which continued until the clock pointed to the hour. In the Lords, where a simultaneous debate took place, a similar stream of commination was poured out by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Milner, the latter of whom thought it possible that a Boer majority would evict the Civil Servants, and predicted a gap in the provision for Labour which might be disastrous to the mines. These denunciations continued intermittently till the month of December, when the Letters Patent[1]

[1] Cd. 3250. A provision not mentioned in the debate of July laid down that when there had been a disagreement between the two Houses (Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly) as to proposed legislation, after

granting the new Constitution were issued. Much skilful and difficult work had been done in the meantime by the Liberal lawyers (who had the assistance of Sir Richard Solomon), and especially Mr. Asquith and Lord Loreburn, to give clearness and precision to the legal foundations and to prepare the way for the future. The Government, it now appeared, looked beyond the immediate step taken for the Transvaal to the ultimate union of South Africa. 'I desire to add on behalf of His Majesty's Government,' said the Colonial Secretary in his covering despatch, 'that they have advised His Majesty to grant immediate Responsible Government to the Transvaal, in full confidence that under the free institutions established by this constitution, the prosperity and contentment of the Transvaal and its people will be permanently secured, and with the hope that the step now taken will, in due time, lead to the union of the interests of the whole of His Majesty's dominions in South Africa.' On December 17 the finished work was presented to the two Houses of Parliament by Lord Elgin and Mr. Winston Churchill respectively, and the necessary resolutions were agreed to without a division. The public generally received the accomplished fact with a generous approval, and the Opposition press was by no means unanimous in its hostility.[1] There was a feeling stronger than party that the Government had placed themselves in line with the greatest and wisest of British traditions.

So ended for Campbell-Bannerman the long struggle, with which his name will be chiefly associated. From beginning to end he had run a straight and manly course, yielding indeed to his emotions when his sense of humanity

the Bill has for the second time been passed by the Assembly, the Governor might convene a joint meeting of the two bodies, and if the Bill received an absolute majority of the total number of the members of the two bodies, it should become law. A Land Settlement Board was also set up to last not longer than five years, for the protection of British settlers assisted by the Government.

[1] The Orange River Colony Constitution, following closely the lines of the Transvaal Constitution, was promulgated by Letters Patent in June 1907.—See speech in the House of Commons by Mr. Churchill, June 20.

CHAP. XXIX. 1906. was touched, but at all times pursuing steadfastly the dominant Liberal idea which was his political lodestar. To him the South African War was a disaster which could only be retrieved by a generous act of policy reconciling British and Boer and paving the way to the Union of South Africa in a federation of self-governing States. In proportion as he recognised Boer sovereignty to be a lost cause he had felt it imperative to insist that the struggle between British and Dutch in South Africa differed from all ordinary wars between enemies, in that both would be required to live side by side in the same system and under the same laws, and that the victors could not afford to inflict on the vanquished wounds that festered, memories that rankled, or terms that humiliated. Those who preach forbearance and mercy in the heat of a struggle in which it seems a peremptory necessity to keep warlike emotions at fever heat must be ready to take the consequences; and he bore uncomplainingly the abuse and obloquy which for three years and more were his daily portion. But he was determined, when his hour came, that what he had preached he would practise without one moment's unnecessary delay, and if ever a public man may be said to have achieved his main purpose in public life, it was he at the close of the session of 1906. Looking back on these events after the experience of a far greater struggle, we may be tempted to think them of relatively small importance, but it is not the size of the scene which determines the values of political action, and the story of what Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman endured for South Africa, and what he wrought for her and for the British Empire, may shine out in history as one of the great examples of human wisdom and courage.

CHAPTER XXX

THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Foreign Affairs—Some Unpleasing Discoveries—The Situation in 1905—Germany, France, and Morocco—Anti-British Feeling in Germany—Alarm in Paris—Anxiety about the new British Government—Sir Edward Grey and M. Cambon—Some important Despatches—The Military Conversations—Campbell-Bannerman's View—The Algeciras Conference—An easier Situation—Civilities to Germany—Anglo-Russian Relations—La Douma est morte, Vive la Douma—A Turkish Crisis—The Turks and the Sinai Peninsula—A Baptism of Fire.

WHEN the Prime Minister said in his Albert Hall speech before the election that the 'outlook abroad was most pleasing,' he yielded to a cheerful impulse which was scarcely warranted by the facts. His Government had not been six weeks in office before it discovered that there were certain aspects of the situation in Europe which were very decidedly unpleasing.

To explain the position at the end of the year 1905, it is necessary to look back over the events of the previous months. The Germans, who in 1904 had accepted the Anglo-French *Entente* without protest or objection, had taken advantage of the defeat of Russia to reveal their true feelings. The Emperor now made a strenuous effort to detach the Tsar from his alliance with France, and at the same time started a vigorous offensive against the French activities in Morocco for which the way had been opened by the Anglo-French *Entente*. In April 1904, Count Bülow had told the Reichstag that Germany had no objection to these proceedings, and that her interests were in no way imperilled by them; in April 1905 the whole German press was loudly complaining that Germany had

CHAP. XXX. 1906. been deliberately slighted, and demanding that she should claim her 'place in the sun.' Early in 1905 a French mission had been despatched to Morocco, and a few weeks later the Emperor countered it by a dramatic landing at Tangier (April 2), where he declared in a resounding speech that he would never permit any other Power to step between him and the 'free Sovereign of a free country,' namely, the Sultan of Morocco. The next step was the despatch of the German Minister at Lisbon (Count von Tatterbach) to Fez, where he attempted to negotiate with the Sultan for the grant of special privileges to Germany, and to persuade him to ignore the Anglo-French-Spanish agreement. The Sultan under this pressure proposed an International Conference to deal with the whole question, and this was finally accepted by France, but not (as was believed at the time) until she had been threatened with war and compelled under that threat to sacrifice her Foreign Minister, M. Delcassé, whose main offence in German eyes was that he had been the chief instrument in concluding the Anglo-French *Entente*.

Throughout the whole of the year 1905 a wave of anti-British feeling had been passing over Germany. The German Navy League conducted a vigorous agitation in preparation for the new Navy Bill, which added substantially to the programme of 1900. At the same time the Emperor was exceedingly vocal in exhorting the Army to keep its 'powder dry, sword keen, eyes on the goal, muscles taut,' and conveyed dark hints to those who 'would cross Germany's path or interfere with her in the legitimate promotion of her interests.' In his speech in opening the Reichstag on November 28, he said that the relations of Germany were 'with all Powers correct and with some good and friendly,' and by paying special compliments to Japan, Russia, and the United States, he left it to be inferred that France and Great Britain were the Powers with whom his relations were correct but not friendly. Speaking specifically of the Morocco question, he said that the

difficulties which had arisen between Germany and France had 'no other source than an inclination to settle without our co-operation affairs in which the German Empire also has interests to maintain,' and 'tendencies of this kind, though suppressed at one point, might,' he added, 'appear at another.' Therefore, while it was satisfactory that an understanding had been reached, 'the signs of the times made it the duty of the nation to strengthen its defences against unjust attack.' The President of the Chamber further improved the occasion by observing when taking his seat that the situation was 'serious, very serious,' and Prince Bülow (who had been elevated to the rank of Prince on the morrow of M. Delcassé's resignation) spoke openly of the 'perilously strained' feeling of England towards Germany and of the 'profound dislike' of some Englishmen for Germany. In the meantime high words were being used in the diplomatic circle. Prince Bülow told the French Ambassador at Berlin that the matter was 'a bad, a very bad one,' and advised the French 'not to linger on a road bordered by precipices and even abysses.'

The French were seriously alarmed. They had, in their own view, gone to the extreme of self-abasement in sacrificing their Foreign Secretary, and yet Germany was unappeasable. Since the Emperor William's meeting with the Czar at Bjoerkoe in July of this year, they had been uncertain about the fighting value of the Russian Alliance, and it seemed as if they were now to be victimised for seeking the friendship of Great Britain. Germany was at liberty to protect herself by a Triple Alliance, but it was apparently a mortal offence that France should even seek friendship with other Powers. It was seriously feared in Paris that Germany might take advantage of the change of Government in England to make a lunge at France before the new British Government could find its bearings. Hence it seemed of supreme importance to the French Prime Minister to ascertain the intentions of this Government without delay.

CHAP. XXX. 1906.

II

Before coming to that question, it is important to understand exactly the position left by Mr. Balfour's Government. The *Entente* bound the two countries to nothing more than diplomatic co-operation in emergencies arising out of their mutual engagements, but Lord Lansdowne had explained with some precision what he understood by this obligation. On April 25, 1905, Sir F. Bertie informed M. Delcassé, on Lord Lansdowne's instructions, that in the event of the German Government seeking for a port on the coast of Morocco, the British Government would be willing to join the French in strong opposition to such a proposal; and they hoped that, if the question were raised, they would be given full opportunity to concert with the French Government the measures which might be taken to meet it. On May 3, Lord Lansdowne had a long conversation with M. Cambon, who expressed satisfaction at what Sir F. Bertie had said to M. Delcassé, and three weeks later (May 24) M. Cambon wrote to Lord Lansdowne that M. Delcassé was highly satisfied with the offer of assistance made by our Government; to which Lord Lansdowne replied on the following day, suggesting that the two Governments should treat one another with the utmost confidence and discuss all likely contingencies. The French Government now desired to ascertain whether the new British Government were of the same disposition.

Colonel Repington, then military correspondent of the *Times*, has related how, at this juncture, he saw Major Huguet, the French Military Attaché in London, and learnt from him that his Government were seriously anxious about the intentions of the Germans and not a little worried because Sir Edward Grey had not, so far, confirmed Lord Lansdowne's 'assurances.'[1] This Col. Repington reported to Sir Edward, who replied from Fallodon on December 30, 'I have not receded from anything that Lord Lansdowne said to the French, and have no hesitation in affirming it.'

[1] *The First World War*, by Lieut.-Col. C. à Court Repington, vol. i., pp. 2-6.

On the 9th of January Sir Edward, who was now in London, wrote to Campbell-Bannerman, who had returned to Belmont from his Liverpool tour on the early morning of the 11th:— CHAP. XXX. ÆT. 69.

Sir Edward Grey to Campbell-Bannerman

FOREIGN OFFICE, *Jan.* 9, 1906.—It is unfortunate that the Election clashes with the approach and meeting of the Morocco Conference, for I should like to have been in more frequent communication with you. But this cannot be helped. All that has passed has been sent to you, but I may sum it up as follows:—

With the French matters stand as Lord Lansdowne left them. I have promised diplomatic support in accordance with Article IX., and have let it be known that we shall give this. I have not said a word of anything more, and the French have asked no inconvenient questions.

From this point matters moved a little faster. On the following day (Jan. 10) M. Cambon, the French Ambassador, who had been on leave in France, returned to London and saw Sir Edward, who reported his conversation in a despatch to Sir F. Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris. This must be given in full:—

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE, *Jan.* 10, 1906.

SIR,—After informing me this afternoon of the nature of the instructions which M. Rouvier was addressing to the French Plenipotentiary at the Conference about to meet at Algeciras on Moorish affairs (as recorded in my immediately preceding despatch), the French Ambassador went on to say that he had spoken to M. Rouvier on the importance of arriving at an understanding as to the course which would be taken by France and Great Britain in the event of the discussions terminating in a rupture between France and Germany. M. Cambon said that he did not believe that the German Emperor desired war, but that His Majesty was pursuing a very dangerous policy. He had succeeded in inciting public opinion and military opinion in Germany, and there was a risk that matters might be brought to a point in which a pacific issue would be difficult. During the previous discussions on the subject of Morocco, Lord Lansdowne had expressed his opinion that the British and French Governments should frankly discuss any eventualities that might seem possible, and by his instructions your Excellency had communicated a Memorandum to M. Delcassé to the same effect. It

CHAP. XXX. 1906. had not been considered necessary at the time to discuss the eventuality of war, but it now seemed desirable that this eventuality should also be considered.

M. Cambon said that he had spoken to this effect to M. Rouvier, who agreed in his view. It was not necessary, nor, indeed, expedient, that there should be any formal alliance, but it was of great importance that the French Government should know beforehand whether, in the event of aggression against France by Germany, Great Britain would be prepared to render to France armed assistance.

I replied that at the present moment the Prime Minister was out of town, and that the Cabinet were all dispersed seeing after the elections; that we were not as yet aware of the sentiments of the country as they would be expressed at the polls; and that it was impossible therefore for me, in the circumstances, to give a reply to his Excellency's question. I could only state as my personal opinion that, if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the Agreement which our predecessors had recently concluded with the French Government, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France.

M. Cambon said that he understood this, and that he would repeat his question after the elections.

I said that what Great Britain earnestly desired was that the Conference should have a pacific issue favourable to France.

His Excellency replied that nothing would have a more pacific influence on the Emperor of Germany than the conviction that if Germany attacked France she would find England allied against her.

I said that I thought the German Emperor did believe this, but that it was one thing that this opinion should be held in Germany and another that we should give a positive assurance to France on the subject. There could be no greater mistake than that a Minister should give such an assurance unless he were perfectly certain that it would be fulfilled. I did not believe that any Minister could, in present circumstances, say more than I had done, and however strong the sympathy of Great Britain might be with France in the case of a rupture with Germany, the expression which might be given to it and the action which might follow must depend largely upon the circumstances in which the rupture took place.

M. Cambon said that he spoke of aggression on the part of Germany, possibly in consequence of some necessary action on

the part of France for the protection of her Algerian frontier, or, on some other grounds which justified such action.

I said that, as far as a definite promise went, I was not in a position to pledge the country to more than neutrality—a benevolent neutrality if such a thing existed. M. Cambon said that a promise of neutrality did not, of course, satisfy him, and repeated that he would bring the question to me again at the conclusion of the elections.

In the meanwhile, he thought it advisable that unofficial communications between our Admiralty and War Office and the French Naval and Military Attachés should take place as to what action might advantageously be taken in case the two countries found themselves in alliance in such a war. Some communications had, he believed, already passed, and might, he thought, be continued. They did not pledge either Government.

I did not dissent from this view.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD GREY.

Ministers were then scattered for the elections, but Sir Edward submitted the draft of this despatch to the Prime Minister and also to Lord Ripon, the senior Minister available in London; and Lord Fitzmaurice, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, wrote an explanatory letter to the Prime Minister, dated January 11. Lord Fitzmaurice also enclosed a letter from Lord Ripon to himself,[1] commenting

[1] 'One cannot help being anxious about this Morocco business. I am sorry though not surprised to hear that you think the Germans intend to make the Conference a failure. That a European war should arise out of the matter seems almost impossible, but when one has to deal with a potentate like the German Emperor one can feel no real security.

'One of his principal objects, I imagine, is to break down the *entente cordiale* and separate us from France, and I have some fear that he may succeed in doing that. Our engagements with France are, I understand, confined to a promise of full diplomatic support, and I have no doubt that the French Government understand that we are bound to nothing beyond that. But there are indications, I think, both in the newspapers and in such private conversations as Clemenceau's talk with Lister, for example, which seem to show that the French people and many of their public men are expecting support of another kind if the Conference breaks down and serious trouble with Germany arises. If that occurs and we decline, as I think we ought to decline, to go farther than diplomacy will reach, I cannot but fear a cry of *perfide Albion* and a destruction of the present friendship between the two nations. The situation requires great wariness, but we may trust to Grey for that.'—Lord Ripon to Lord Fitzmaurice, *Life of Lord Ripon*, vol. ii. pp. 292-3.

CHAP. XXX. 1906. on the transaction and expressing a fear that there might be a reaction in France when the French people discovered that, contrary to their belief, Great Britain was not pledged to more than diplomatic action. On the 14th Campbell-Bannerman himself replied to Sir Edward from Belmont, acknowledging these communications and adding: 'We have happily a little more time for reflection, as the French Ambassador cannot expect an answer during the elections, and things appear to be looking a little more favourable, and therefore there is less urgency.'

Sir Edward Grey returned to his constituency on January 11, and arranged to meet Mr. Haldane (who also was in the throes of his election campaign in Haddingtonshire) at Berwick the following day, and there discussed with him the question of the 'military conversations.' On the 15th he was again at the Foreign Office and had another interview with M. Cambon, after which he addressed the following despatch to the British Ambassador at Paris:—

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE, *Jan.* 15, 1906.

SIR,—I told M. Cambon to-day that I had communicated to the Prime Minister my account of his conversation with me on the 10th instant. I had heard from the Prime Minister that he could not be in London before the 25th January, and it would therefore not be possible for me to discuss things with him before then, and the Members of the Government would not assemble in London before the 29th; I could therefore give no further answer to-day on the question he had addressed to me. He had spoken to me on the 10th of communications passing between the French Naval Attaché and the Admiralty. I understood that these communications had been with Sir John Fisher. If that was so, it was not necessary for me to do any more; but, with regard to the communications between the French Military Attaché and the War Office, I understood from him that these had taken place through an intermediary. I had therefore taken the opportunity of speaking to Mr. Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, who had been taking part in my election contest in Northumberland on Friday, and he had authorised me to say that these communications might proceed between the French

Military Attaché and General Grierson direct; but it must be understood that these communications did not commit either Government. M. Cambon said that the intermediary in question had been a retired Colonel, the military correspondent of the *Times*, who, he understood, had been sent from the War Office. —I am, etc., EDWARD GREY.

As will be seen later, Campbell-Bannerman had his misgivings about the interpretation which might be put upon these 'communications,' but he was made aware of all the circumstances and gave his consent to their going forward on the understanding that they were provisional and precautionary measures, and that the Government was not bound by their results. Thus limited, he regarded them as raising no new question of policy and therefore within the competence of the War Office.

He wrote again to Sir Edward Grey on January 21 :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Sir Edward Grey

BELMONT, *Jan.* 21, '06.—I do not think I can possibly get up to London before the end of the week—most probably Saturday.

I think there is an obvious softening on Morocco, for the moment at all events, although it may end in evasion and postponement rather than in settlement.

When would you like to have a Cabinet? Would 30th, 31st, or 1st do? Would you like the answer for the French to be confirmed by a Cabinet before it is given.

He returned to London on January 26, and during the following days was in frequent communication with Sir Edward Grey. He also saw Mr. Haldane and discussed with him the question of the military conversations. On the last day of the month Sir Edward Grey again saw M. Cambon, and once more reported the interview in a despatch to the British Ambassador at Paris :—

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie

FOREIGN OFFICE, *Jan.* 31, 1906.

SIR,—The French Ambassador asked me again to-day whether France would be able to count upon the assistance of England in the event of an attack upon her by Germany.

CHAP. XXX. 1906.

I said that I had spoken on the subject to the Prime Minister and discussed it with him, and that I had three observations to submit.

In the first place, since the Ambassador had spoken to me a good deal of progress has been made. Our military and naval authorities had been in communication with the French, and I assumed that all preparations were ready, so that, if a crisis arose, no time would have been lost for want of a formal engagement.

In the second place, a week or more before Monsieur Cambon had spoken to me, I had taken an opportunity of expressing to Count Metternich my personal opinion, which I understood Lord Lansdowne had also expressed to him as a personal opinion, that in the event of an attack upon France by Germany arising out of our Morocco Agreement, public feeling in England would be so strong that no British Government could remain neutral. I urged upon Monsieur Cambon that this, which I had reason to know had been correctly reported at Berlin, had produced there the moral effect which Monsieur Cambon had urged upon me as being one of the great securities of peace and the main reason for a formal engagement between England and France with regard to armed co-operation.

In the third place, I pointed out to Monsieur Cambon that at present French policy in Morocco, within the four corners of the Declaration exchanged between us, was absolutely free, that we did not question it, that we suggested no concessions and no alterations in it, that we left France a free hand and gave unreservedly our diplomatic support on which she could count; but that, should our promise extend beyond diplomatic support, and should we take an engagement which might involve us in a war, I was sure my colleagues would say that we must from that time be consulted with regard to French policy in Morocco, and, if need be, be free to press upon the French Government concessions or alterations of their policy which might seem to us desirable to avoid a war.

I asked Monsieur Cambon to weigh these considerations in his mind, and to consider whether the present situation as regards ourselves and France was not so satisfactory that it was unnecessary to alter it by a formal declaration as he desired.

Monsieur Cambon said that in Morocco, if the Conference broke up without favourable result, Germany might place herself behind the Sultan and acquire more and more influence, that trouble might be stirred up on the Algerian frontier, that France

might be obliged to take measures to deal with it as she had done before, and that Germany might announce to France, as she had already once done, that an aggression on Morocco would be an attack upon her, and would be replied to accordingly. In such an event war might arise so suddenly that the need for action would be a question not of days, but of minutes, and that if it was necessary for the British Government to consult, and to wait for manifestations of English public opinion, it might be too late to be of use. He eventually repeated his request for some form of assurance which might be given in conversation. I said that an assurance of that kind could be nothing short of a solemn undertaking. It was one which I could not give without submitting it to the Cabinet and getting their authority, and that were I to submit the question to the Cabinet I was sure that they would say that this was too serious a matter to be dealt with by a verbal engagement but must be put in writing. As far as their good disposition towards France was concerned, I should have no hesitation in submitting such a question to the present Cabinet. Some of those in the Cabinet who were most attached to peace were those also who were the best friends of France, but though I had no doubt about the good disposition of the Cabinet I did think there would be difficulties in putting such an undertaking in writing. It could not be given unconditionally, and it would be difficult to describe the conditions. It amounted in fact to this: that if any change was made, it must be to change the 'Entente' into a defensive alliance. That was a great and formal change, and I again submitted to Monsieur Cambon as to whether the force of circumstances bringing England and France together was not stronger than any assurance in words which could be given at this moment. I said that it might be that the pressure of circumstances—the activity of Germany, for instance—might eventually transform the 'Entente' into a defensive alliance between ourselves and France, but I did not think that the pressure of circumstances was so great as to demonstrate the necessity of such a change yet. I told him also that should such a defensive alliance be formed, it was too serious a matter to be kept secret from Parliament. The Government could conclude it without the assent of Parliament, but it would have to be published afterwards. No British Government could commit the country to such a serious thing and keep the engagement secret.

CHAP. XXX. ÆT. 69.

Monsieur Cambon, in summing up what I had said, dwelt upon the fact that I had expressed my personal opinion that, in the

CHAP. XXX. 1906.

event of an attack by Germany upon France, no British Government could remain neutral. I said that I had used this expression to Count Metternich first, and not to him, because, supposing it appeared that I had over-estimated the strength of feeling of my countrymen, there could be no disappointment in Germany, but I could not express so decidedly my personal opinion to France because a personal opinion was not a thing upon which, in so serious a matter, a policy could be founded. In speaking to him, therefore, I must keep well within the mark. Much would depend as to the manner in which war broke out between Germany and France. I did not think people in England would be prepared to fight in order to put France in possession of Morocco. They would say that France should wait for opportunities and be content to take time, and that it was unreasonable to hurry matters to the point of war. But if, on the other hand, it appeared that the war was forced upon France by Germany to break up the Anglo-French 'Entente,' public opinion would undoubtedly be very strong on the side of France. At the same time Monsieur Cambon must remember that England at the present moment would be most reluctant to find herself engaged in a great war, and I hesitated to express a decided opinion as to whether the strong feeling of the press and of public opinion on the side of France would be strong enough to overcome the great reluctance which existed amongst us now to find ourselves involved in war. I asked Monsieur Cambon, however, to bear in mind that, if the French Government desired it, it would be possible at any time to re-open the conversation. Events might change, but, as things were at present, I did not think it was necessary to press the question of a defensive alliance.

Monsieur Cambon said the question was very grave and serious, because the German Emperor had given the French Government to understand that they could not rely upon us, and it was very important to them to feel that they could.—I am, with great truth and respect, Sir, Your Excellency's most obedient, humble servant, E. GREY.

This also was submitted to the Prime Minister before it was despatched.

The circumstances, therefore, leave no doubt that Campbell-Bannerman was cognisant of and party to the steps taken during these critical days by the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary for War. On the day after

his last interview with M. Cambon, Sir Edward Grey was withdrawn from the scene by the tragic accident which had befallen his wife. On the following day (Feb. 2) Campbell-Bannerman wrote to Lord Ripon:—

What a sad calamity, Lady Grey's accident!

Grey's private secretary saw me to-day, and it is arranged that Fitzmaurice and Hardinge will deal with all ordinary business, referring any doubtful or important points to me. If anything is *very* doubtful, I will use the freedom of consulting you.

The secy. said that Cambon appears satisfied. But I do not like the stress laid upon joint preparations. It comes very close to an honourable undertaking: and it will be known on both sides of the Rhine.

But let us hope for the best.

The despatches show the elaborate care which Sir Edward Grey had taken to avoid the conclusion that the Government was committed by the military conversations, but 'the stress laid upon joint preparations' arose inevitably out of the circumstances. The French said, with their usual logic, that, if the hypothesis of British intervention was entertained at all, plans should be laid to make that intervention effective. There were moments in January 1906 when an attack by Germany on France seemed by no means a remote hypothesis, and for weeks together M. Rouvier's Government greatly feared that Germany intended to anticipate the Algeciras Conference by striking at France. The circumstances, therefore, seemed to require that the British Government should either specifically declare that it would in no circumstances contemplate armed intervention or permit some coherent scheme of action to be thought out which would make intervention useful if, in the last resort, it were undertaken. It was impossible at the time for any one in this country to say that the French fears were groundless. On New Year's Day Herr von Tschirsky, then Prussian Minister at Hamburg (and later Foreign Secretary), had spoken in ominous terms to the British Consul-General at Hamburg. 'Germany's policy,' he said, 'always had been and would

CHAP. XXX. 1906.

be to try to frustrate any coalition between two States which might result in damaging Germany's interests and prestige, and Germany would, if she thought that such a coalition was being formed, even if its actual results had not yet been carried into practical effect, not hesitate to take such steps as she thought proper to break the combination.'

As appears from the correspondence and the despatches here printed, both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary held strongly that if any change was to be made in the form of the *Entente*, it could only be by the deliberate act of Cabinet and Parliament. Sir Edward Grey so informed M. Cambon in his interview on Jan. 31, and the net result of the interchange of opinion was to leave the *status quo* unchanged. There was, therefore, no new question of policy to be considered, and 'the Cabinet on the French question' which Campbell-Bannerman proposed in his letter to Sir Edward Grey of Jan. 21 appears to have been postponed when Sir Edward Grey was called away from London. When Sir Edward returned ten days later, the crisis had passed and the question of military preparations had ceased to be urgent. The Algeciras Conference which met on Jan. 17 had some anxious moments, and for a time it seemed as if the unyielding attitude of the German delegates would prevent any issue, but Russia and Italy as well as Great Britain powerfully supported the French claim, and Germany in the end yielded the principal French demand, which was for the right of organising an International Police in co-operation with Spain. That point being gained, British influence was used for moderation in other respects, and France yielded the equal rights for foreigners and the establishment of the new State Bank financed in equal parts by all the Powers, which Germany desired.

When the new Parliament met (Feb. 19), Campbell-Bannerman defined our relations with France in words which were carefully chosen to keep the balance between friendship with her and good relations with other Powers:—

The Rt. Hon. gentleman [Mr. Chamberlain] spoke of our relations to the nation and the Government of France. They remain exactly what they were. We are giving the French Government all the diplomatic support in our power; and we are giving it without the slightest prejudice, not only to our perfect amity, but great good-will, to all the other Powers that may be concerned. It is right for the people of this country that it should be stated again and again, and as emphatically as possible, that the undertaking we have with France remains as strongly entrenched as it was when it was first established, that it has no sinister purpose towards any other nation, and that we merely wish to find in it a means of strengthening that good and almost affectionate relation between France and Great Britain which we are all anxious to encourage.

III

The Alcegiras settlement was far from final, as subsequent events proved, but it ended the crisis for the time being and relaxed the tension. Serious efforts were now made to improve British-German relations, and a party of German Burgomeisters who visited England in May were everywhere warmly welcomed. Sir Henry himself addressed them in a speech which gave great satisfaction to the guests and created the impression that there was a real *détente* in Anglo-German relations. Finally, in the month of August, King Edward went from Marienbad, where he was then staying, to visit the German Emperor at Cronberg, and the Emperor was reported to have seized the occasion to put his side of the case. The French, he declared, were a bundle of nerves and took alarm without cause. Their fears of Germany were absolutely unfounded; his visit to Tangier had been an innocent excursion warmly welcomed by British and Spanish, who looked upon him as a deliverer from French oppression. The effect of these explanations was perhaps a little discounted by the contempt which he poured on the coming Hague Conference, and the loud praise of militarism and the military virtues with which he regaled his British visitors.

All this was faithfully reported to the Prime Minister,

CHAP. XXX. 1906.

who also was at Marienbad, on the King's return, and presently Mr. Haldane arrived to visit the King on his way to Berlin, whither, as Secretary for War, he had been invited by the Emperor on the occasion of the autumn manœuvres. King Edward had been a little uncertain whether the eminent legal qualities of his new Secretary of State would make him a suitable representative of British militarism among the German warriors, but Mr. Haldane had anticipated this objection by modestly proposing to present himself as a black-coated and ignorant civilian, and on that footing both the King and the Prime Minister were heartily in favour of his going. At the last moment, however, came a telegram from the Foreign Office, expressing grave doubts whether these civilities would be understood in France and requesting that the visit should be cancelled. Mr. Haldane put the case to the King and the Prime Minister, both of whom were strongly of opinion that a withdrawal at the eleventh hour would be impolitic and discourteous, and with their concurrence he proceeded on his way. Not the least of the German Emperor's complaints, and one which he constantly repeated in these days, was that no British Minister, or, indeed, any Englishman of distinction, ever visited his capital, and he would certainly not have taken it kindly if Mr. Haldane had been compelled to plead a sudden indisposition detaining him at Marienbad when he was expected in Berlin. Whole-heartedly as he favoured the *Entente* with France, Campbell-Bannerman was always opposed to any construction of it which would compel the British Government to be uncivil to Germany.

IV

Throughout the year British relations with Russia continued to be a subject of perplexity and anxiety. That country was in the throes of one of the chronic struggles between the Czardom and the popular forces. The suppression of the revolutionary movements of the previous year had been followed by stringent repressive measures in all parts of the country. Executions, banishments,

wholesale suppression of newspapers, and a general campaign of violence and assassination in which the Police and the 'Black Hundred' vied with the revolutionaries, continued without ceasing during the early months of the year. Russia was the ally of France, and, according to the rules of the great game as played in Europe in these times, it was desirable that Great Britain also should be on good terms with her. The idea of Russia drifting into helpless anarchy or of succumbing to the blandishments of the German Emperor—no idle panic, as the famous 'Willy-Nickie' correspondence has shown—was a nightmare to the French, who were urgent that Great Britain should do nothing to offend the Czar. But even if the Government had no sentiment itself (which was far from being the case), it had to reckon with the strong conviction of the Radical wing of its party, that the Czardom was a detestable tyranny, which a British Government, and above all a British Liberal Government, should keep at arm's length. The one gleam of light was that parliamentary institutions were at last to be given a trial, and that the Czar had solemnly pledged himself to give large powers to the Duma which was inaugurated in May of this year. The Government clung to this to justify the efforts which they were evidently making to improve their relations with the Czar's Government, and to carry them through the considerable embarrassment in which they were placed by a projected visit of the British fleet to Cronstadt in the month of July. That could not be cancelled without giving open offence to Russia, nor carried through without angry remonstrances from members of Parliament who saw a vision of British sailors fraternising with 'Czarist assassins.' The Government sought safety by issuing an instruction to the fleet that 'care should be taken to show civility to the chief officers of the Duma,' but this did not appease the objectors, who renewed their protests in both Houses of Parliament, until, as may be conjectured, the Russian Government itself took the hint and intimated—to the great relief of British Ministers—that it would prefer the visit postponed.

CHAP. XXX. 1906. That was on July 16. Within the week Campbell-Bannerman himself found the opportunity to strike a resounding blow for Russian Liberalism. On the 22nd, the Duma, after ten weeks of stormy existence, was abruptly suspended by imperial ukase. On the following day (Monday, July 23), he was due to address the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a body comprising representatives of all the European Parliaments (and this year including a special delegation from the Duma), which was to hold its opening Conference in the Royal Gallery of the Palace of Westminster. The occasion was highly important, and his speech had been most carefully prepared, being written in English, translated into French, revised, corrected, submitted to the Foreign Office, and finally printed for distribution after its delivery. Everything was in order by the Saturday evening, but then on the Monday morning, a few hours before the meeting, came the announcement—cutting right across it—that the Czar had suspended the Duma. What was he to do? Keep an ineffective silence with the Duma delegates in front of him and all the world ringing with this news? Plunge in with hot protest regardless of high policy and the proprieties? Drop some banal phrase which would defy criticism by being devoid of meaning? The problem might well have baffled the oldest diplomatic hand, but he was more than equal to it. Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, his secretary, describes how, on coming to Downing Street on the Monday morning, he found him with his head very close to the table, writing in pencil on a sheet of notepaper. Having finished writing he handed it on for inspection, saying that this was the addition he intended to make to his speech, but 'rather too late,' he thought, 'to send it over to the F.O.' On the slip was written :—

Je ne fais pas de commentaire sur les nouvelles qui ont éclaté ce matin : ce n'en est ni le lieu ni le moment. Nous n'avons pas une assez grande connaissance des faits pour pouvoir blâmer ou louer. Mais ceci du moins nous pouvons dire—nous qui fondons notre confiance et nos espoirs sur le régime parlementaire.

Les nouvelles institutions ont souvent une jeunesse accidentée sinon orageuse. La Douma revivra d'une forme ou d'autre. Nous pouvons dire avec toute sincérité : La Douma est morte, Vive la Douma !

Five hundred members from twenty-two different Parliaments assembled in the Long Gallery—the largest gathering of the kind that had ever been held. The scene that followed has been described by many pens, and it will suffice to add a note from Mr. Ponsonby's diary: 'C.-B., very smartly dressed, with white waistcoat, spoke from a sort of tribune erected at the side. His French accent was excellent, and in my opinion he delivered the speech far better than any English speech I ever heard from him. He was well received, but when he came to the passage he had himself interpolated and with great emphasis lifting up his hand cried: "La Douma est morte, vive la Douma!"[1] there was an extraordinary scene of enthusiasm, the delegates rising to their feet and cheering. The news of the dissolution of the Douma that morning had cast a gloom over those

[1] The entire passage in the authorised English translation runs: 'In this connection I cannot refrain from saying for myself, and, I am sure, for every one in this great and historic assembly, how glad we are to welcome among us to-day the representatives of the youngest of Parliaments—the Russian Duma. We deeply regret the circumstances of their appearance in our midst. It is, I venture to think, of good augury for your movement and for the future of Europe that the first official act of the Russian Parliament in regard to affairs outside the Russian Empire has been to authorise its delegates to come here to Westminster and to join hands with us in the assertion of those great principles of peace and good-will which were so incalculably advanced by the head of the Russian State, the author and convener of the first Hague Conference. I make no comment on the news which has reached us this morning; this is neither the place nor the moment for that. We have not a sufficient acquaintance with the facts to be in a position to justify or criticise. But this at least we can say, we who base our confidence and our hopes on the parliamentary system—new institutions have often a disturbed, if not a stormy, youth. The Duma will revive in one form or another. We can say with all sincerity, "The Duma is dead; long live the Duma." The rest of the speech dealt with the progress of the Peace movement, and Campbell-Bannerman asked the delegates to 'urge their Governments in the name of humanity to go into the Hague Conference (fixed for the following year), as we ourselves hope to go, pledged to diminished charges in regard to armaments.

CHAP. XXX. 1906. present. These words lifted it and made out of a catastrophe a battle-cry of hope.'

The following day he wrote to Sir Edward Grey :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Sir Edward Grey

10 DOWNING STREET, *July* 24, '06.—Thanks for your note. I am very glad that Cambon approved of what I said. I do not know a better judge.

My difficulty was the Duma business, which was sprung on me only yesterday morning. I had to say something and to write it out in French and English—and mere platitudes would not do. I think what I did say was free from offence, yet was, I think, effective for good. My only fear was (and is) that detached words might be telegraphed which, away from context, might seem imprudent or mischievous. I hope that has not occurred.

The Russian Ambassador was not quite so approving as the French, and for several days was reported to be greatly disturbed at the unconventional rebuke to his imperial master. Campbell-Bannerman took an early opportunity of meeting him, and succeeded in persuading him that, read with their context, his words exactly conformed to what the Czar himself had publicly proclaimed.

V

No sooner were their anxieties about Algeciras relieved than the Cabinet found themselves face to face with a Turkish crisis. The Turks, Lord Cromer had reported from Cairo in the month of February, were making a serious attempt to 'jump' the Sinai Peninsula, and to bring the Turkish frontier to the banks of the Suez Canal. This question had arisen in the year 1892, but was then supposed to have been settled by a firman to which a telegram from Lord Cromer, affirming that the whole of this region was to be administered by Egypt, had been 'annexed' without comment or objection from the Porte. In February, however, Egyptian troops sent to occupy certain posts in the interior, including Tabah on the west of the Gulf of Akabah, had found the Turkish flag flying

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall. S.W.

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Nous pouvons dire avec toute sincérité — "La Douma est morte, Vive la Douma".

ORIGINAL DRAFT IN SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN'S HANDWRITING OF PASSAGE IN HIS SPEECH OF 23RD JULY 1906, TO THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE IN THE ROYAL GALLERY OF WESTMINSTER PALACE, WHICH INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RUSSIAN DUMA

pp 262-3

and Turkish troops in occupation. The British Government immediately requested the withdrawal of these troops and proposed a delimitation Commission to settle the boundary, whereupon the Sultan retorted by demanding the withdrawal of the Egyptians and putting in claims which would have closed the Gulf of Akabah and brought the Turkish frontier up to Suez. March and the greater part of April were filled with these moves, and at the end of April the attitude of the Porte looked so threatening that Sir Edward Grey felt obliged to ask for a special Cabinet, and warned the Prime Minister, who was laid up with a feverish cold at Dover, that he might have to ask his colleagues to 'sanction something disagreeable.'

Clearly the Turkish encroachment could not be permitted, but it was not quite easy to decide what was best to do. Lord Cromer reported serious unrest in Egypt, and asked for the reinforcement of the British garrison, which was plainly a necessary precaution. But he wished also that British troops should be landed on the Sinai Peninsula, and to that the Cabinet demurred on the advice of their experts, who were strongly against starting operations—especially with British troops—in that torrid region at the beginning of the hot season. In the end it was decided to despatch the ultimatum which Sir Edward Grey had prepared, requiring an unequivocal acceptance of the Egyptian demands, and to back it, if necessary, by a naval demonstration and the seizure of Turkish islands. For ten days the situation remained an anxious one, and Campbell-Bannerman returned from Dover to preside over the Cabinet which put the finishing touch to these arrangements, but the threat proved sufficient, and on May 13 the crisis ended in the complete submission of the Porte and the withdrawal of the Turkish troops from Tabah. No other solution was possible, and if any other had been permitted, the defence of Egypt in the Great War would have been a vastly more perplexing problem than it proved to be.

The letters which he wrote from Dover on this matter serve to illustrate his method of dealing with foreign affairs

and his relations with the Foreign Secretary, who was careful to consult him on every point :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Sir Edward Grey

DOVER, *April* 25, '06.—I hardly think you need come down, but I fear there is no chance of my being allowed to go out of doors for a day or two yet. I am more than doubtful about Friday.

The main fact, however, appears clear. The Sultan, even more than his Minister, shows an obstinate desire to find an excuse on things as they stand for two objects:

(1) To come close up to Egypt and overawe, or have the means of forcibly interfering with, the Egyptian Government for which we are responsible.

(2) To come within striking distance of the Canal.

Both of these are hostile and mischievous objects, and we cannot be assenting parties to them. Having exercised great patience and finding him not only obdurate, but undisputedly aggressive, how can we avoid frankly showing our determination to defend the independence of Egypt and the international interests of the Canal ?

The question is, which is the most effective means of exhibiting our determination ? On that we must hear our Departments, but I should be ready to agree to the course which, after hearing their advice, seems most likely to open the Sultan's eyes.

DOVER, *April* 27, '06.—Evidently no big step can be taken until the reinforcement of Infantry arrive.

Remembering the phrase dropped by some one in Moukhtar's entourage that fleets do not operate on shore, some weight is to be attached to the rumour of a Turkish occupation of the Peninsula if any island is taken possession of. I think Cromer's No. 114 is calculated to make one think.

Again, the memorandum circulated to the Cabinet reveals a pretty fluid case on the merits. The one solid thing is our persistent demand to have a Commission—but would that be a commission on the whole thing or only on the (more or less direct) frontier line from El Arish (?) to Akabah (?)

I am encouraged by my medico to expect . . . release on Monday ?

DOVER, *April* 28, '06.—I think the sooner our reply goes the better.

But I am not sure about one phrase in the telegram, referring to the telegram of April '92.

If you look at the enclosed report by Ripon of the doings of yesterday's Cabinet, you will see that his impression is that the contention of the Chancellor was sustained, and the phrase as originally proposed was either struck out or altered so as to avoid a pledge to Cromer's interpretation. I presume the original words were stronger than those now used? There is a certain useful vagueness in the words 'delimitation on the basis of,' etc., etc. If that covers the decision of the Cabinet as stated by Ripon, I am quite content.

Your letter to me rather implies that the Chancellor's criticism was overruled or at least passed by. I am only anxious to uphold the Cabinet decision.

The political importance of keeping those fellows out of the Peninsula is immense. As I said before, the case based on the '92 telegram seemed to me thin and technical—good enough as a diplomatic point, but hardly strong enough to carry an ultimatum. I should therefore have agreed with the Chancellor's view, had I been present; but if the words now proposed escape the full force of his criticism and represent the modified view of the Cabinet, it is all right so far as I am concerned.

I strongly hope to be up on Monday afternoon.

DOVER, *May* 1, '06.—I fully concur in all you have done about the Turkish squabble. I do not at all hold with the Chancellor that we could bisect the Peninsula, and the most important thing is to show that we will not yield to the wiles of the Turk.

This was the new Cabinet's baptism of fire, and by general consent it acquitted itself admirably. 'I was rather surprised,' wrote Lord Ripon in a letter to the Prime Minister, describing the Cabinet of the 25th, 'at the small opposition to the warlike measures proposed by the F.O., but the case was clear and Sultan Abdul Hamid had no friends in any camp.' In the light of after events and with the knowledge that we now have of German-Turkish strategy in the Great War, it is perhaps not too suspicious to perceive the hand of Germany in this incident. There is no

evidence on the subject, but it was unlike the Turks to make a move of this kind on their own initiative; and to threaten the British Empire by an attack on the Suez Canal was undoubtedly from this time onwards one of the plans of the German General Staff in the event of war.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FIRST SESSION

The Shadow of the House of Lords—A Congested King's Speech—The Prime Minister and the New House—The Return of Mr. Balfour—A Fiscal Debate—'Enough of this Foolery'—Drafting the Education Bill—Many Opinions—The Inevitable Compromise—Agitation in the Country—The Trade Disputes Bill—A Machiavellian Stroke—Campbell-Bannerman's Opinion—Plural Voting—'Marked down for Slaughter'—The Education Bill in the House of Commons—Navy and Army Estimates—A Letter to Lord Ripon.

A CONSERVATIVE Government coming into power with an immense majority and every prospect before it of an uninterrupted reign for five or six years might have chosen this moment to rest and be thankful. Not so a Liberal Government. To Campbell-Bannerman and his colleagues it was evident from the beginning that a reaction must follow, and that, when it came, the prospect of carrying Liberal measures through the House of Lords would constantly diminish. Great and powerful as the Liberal position seemed to be when the new Parliament met on the 13th of February 1906, the shadow of the House of Lords lay over it from the first hour, and the activities of the new Government became necessarily a race with time, so that the utmost might be accomplished before the Conservative forces rallied and gained confidence to employ their veto. No one was better aware of this condition than the Prime Minister, who told an enthusiastic company at a congratulatory dinner given him by the National Liberal Club on the 14th that there were no mysteries in Liberal policy, and would be no surprises in the Government programme, and 'What they wanted now was simply to get to work.'

CHAP. XXXI. 1906.

The King raised his eyebrows on being presented with a 'gracious' speech promising twenty-two Bills in the new session, but was reassured on being told that many of them were 'uncontroversial' or 'departmental.' But in the forefront stood an Education Bill which clearly was going to challenge the Unionist settlement of 1902, and just behind it a Trade Disputes Bill, raising the question which, above all others, the Conservative employing class wished to leave alone. Moreover, plural voting was threatened with extinction; a Crofters Bill was promised for Scotland, a Labourers Bill for Ireland, and the whole English Land Question was to be opened up 'at no distant date.' Finally, the Irish question still loomed large in a paragraph which spoke of plans for 'imposing and effecting economies in the system of Government in Ireland, and for introducing into it means for associating the people with the conduct of Irish affairs.' The Cabinet were in fact feverishly at work upon controversial measures of all kinds, and an impatient and zealous party watched anxiously lest any moment should be lost.

The opening debates in the new Parliament, which met for business on February 19, were a general rehearsal of the leading Liberal and Radical themes. Crowded Houses, in which the overflowing Government party could scarcely find standing-room to the right of the Speaker, listened breathlessly to all Ministerial speeches, and from the first manifested an extraordinary warmth and friendliness to the Prime Minister, who rapidly gained an ascendancy over his followers which seemed little less than magical to old parliamentary hands. He spoke now as one in authority, with dignity and power, and a readiness of speech of which in previous Parliaments he had shown no sign. A word from him would calm untimely excitement; a hint that he was worried or tired brought the fiercest Radical to reason. A complete confidence that he was doing his best, that he would, as he had promised, guard the doctrine against trimmers and time-servers, and that he had reasons, not always to be explained,

but still good reasons, when he seemed to yield, prevailed in the rank and file. Cheerfully he gave them liberty to enlarge the scope of the Government programme, when opportunity offered, and before Easter they had passed resolutions or introduced Bills for the feeding of school children, the payment of members, the payment of returning officers' charges out of public funds, and the granting of old age pensions. Clearly the new Parliament meant business.

The Opposition, meanwhile, was mainly occupied in another of its many attempts to harmonise its conflicting opinions on the Tariff question. Mr. Balfour was supposed to be in favour of dropping it and concentrating on the practical business of opposition, but Mr. Chamberlain was unrepentant and insisted on his view that the new Parliament was only an interlude to the final triumph of his cause. In any case he could claim that the great majority of the surviving Unionists were whole-hogging Chamberlainites. For a week or more at the beginning of February Mr. Balfour seemed to be obdurate, and on the 12th he delivered a speech in the City of London, where he was now seeking a seat after his defeat in East Manchester, which was generally interpreted to mean that he would make no advance. But two days later he exchanged the 'Valentine letters' with Mr. Chamberlain and made profession of his belief that 'fiscal reform was and must remain the first constructive work of the Unionist Party,' and that 'the imposition of a small duty on foreign corn was not in principle objectionable.' In reply Mr. Chamberlain 'cordially welcomed' this announcement, and placed his services at the disposal of Mr. Balfour for the attainment of the policy thus defined.

This correspondence paved the way for Mr. Balfour's return to the House as leader of the Opposition—a position which had been entrusted temporarily to Mr. Chamberlain while he was seeking a seat and settling his terms with the Tariff Reformers. The way was now open for the full-dress debate on the fiscal question which Ministerialists thought

CHAP. XXXI. 1906. to be the proper sequel to their triumph at the polls; and on the very day of his return to the House (March 13), Mr. Balfour found himself confronting the familiar question, now raised in the form of a resolution moved by Sir James Kitson: 'That this House, recognising that in the recent general election the people of the United Kingdom have demonstrated their unqualified fidelity to the principles and practice of Free Trade, deems it right to record its determination to resist any proposal, whether by way of taxation on foreign corn or of the creation of a tariff on foreign goods, to create in this country a system of Protection.' It is not necessary to follow in detail the winding course of this debate, but it remains in the memory for one incident which brought to a climax and finish the long duel which had been fought out between the rival leaders in the previous Parliament. Mr. Balfour, coming new to the scene, had failed to realise the atmosphere of the new House, and he treated it to another of the dialectical performances which on a dozen occasions had enabled him to steer through the rapids in the old Parliament. Affecting to believe that the resolution covered all taxes on imports not balanced by excise, he asked whether the Government were prepared to abolish the duties on cocoa and tobacco, and if not, why not? Were they prepared to pledge themselves against the protection of labour from foreign competition, to abolish the Indian cotton duties, to say that for six years —the presumed duration of this Parliament—whatever the emergencies, there would be no 'broadening of the basis of taxation?' And so on through a series of questions designed to suggest once more that there was no intelligible meaning which a really enlightened mind could assign to the phrases 'Free Trade' and 'Protection,' and no prophecy possible except to a 'knave and a fool' as to the course which might be taken or might have to be taken in the coming six years.

Mr. Balfour learned later to understand the new House and subsequently won from it a real respect for his qualities and abilities. But on this occasion it listened with angry

impatience to what it regarded as deliberate trifling. The new members had never heard anything like it, and were incredulous when old members assured them that this was the common form of fiscal debate in the previous House. The 'sense of the House' was that the front bench should leave this speech unanswered, but since Mr. Chamberlain insisted on a reply, Campbell-Bannerman got up with a grim feeling that his hour had come :—

The Right Hon. gentleman is like the old Bourbons in the oft-quoted phrase—he has learnt nothing. He comes back to this new House of Commons with the same airy graces, the same subtle dialectics, the same light and frivolous way of dealing with a great question, but he little knows the temper of the new House of Commons if he thinks those methods will prevail here. He has put some questions to me on this resolution. He has split it up and tortured it and pulled it to pieces, and he thinks that he has put some posers.

I put it to the House whether what I have said does not show how utterly unworthy of the occasion was the speech of the Rt. Hon. gentleman. He first of all rides one horse and then he rides another—two horses perfectly incapable of being ridden together. One of his arguments contradicts the other. Then he says we are to stop the proceedings and this debate and his amendments are not to be moved until we have answered these terrible questions. In so far as I have referred to them I may have answered them incidentally. I have no direct answer to them. They are utterly futile, nonsensical, and misleading. They were invented by the Rt. Hon. gentleman for the purpose of occupying time on this debate. I say, enough of this foolery! It might have answered very well in the last Parliament, but it is altogether out of place in this Parliament. The tone and temper of this Parliament will not permit it. Move your amendments and let us get to business.[1]

An uproarious scene followed as he sat down with these words, which, as his hearers felt, were no deliberate rudeness but an involuntary outburst of feelings pent up through the four years of this controversy. For himself, he was a little remorseful about this episode, and said anxiously

[1] House of Commons, March 12, 1906.

CHAP. XXXI. 1906. before the day was out that he was 'afraid he had done wrong, but he really couldn't help it.' But feeling ran high at this moment, and his party, on the contrary, were unanimous that he never was more right.

II

The Cabinet was now hard at work on the Education Bill, which Mr. Birrell, the Minister of Education, had described in a speech at Bristol as 'the Bill of the session.' That was by no means plain-sailing. Strong as was the Nonconformist objection to the Act of 1902, it was plainly impossible after the four years to repeal that Act and re-establish the School Boards. But the Government were bound to redeem their pledge to establish public control over all schools maintained out of public money and to abolish tests for teachers. In other words, it was necessary as the minimum to transfer all non-provided schools to the local authorities and to release the teachers from the necessity of giving religious instruction. But this of itself did not solve the religious question, and once again Liberal Ministers found themselves driven to choose between alternatives, none of which could please all their supporters, and all of which were open to legitimate objection. As a Scottish Presbyterian, Campbell-Bannerman stood somewhat aloof from the English parties to this controversy, and he had more than once confided to his friends that the solution he would like best would be to drop all State religious instruction and give the various denominations equal facilities to teach their tenets in the public schools. Holding that 'a statutory common creed was as objectionable as a statutory specific creed,' he even sympathised with the objections which high Anglicans took to the undenominational or Cowper-Temple teaching in these schools. But these ideas were easier to apply in Scotland, where the varieties of religious opinion were within limits which enabled all the sects to subscribe to one confession of faith, than in England and Wales, where the different denomina-

tions considered a large part of each other's teaching to be mischievous and heretical, and where the more powerful Churches held it to be a part of their mission to impregnate the schools with their special atmosphere.

In a Cabinet in which Lord Ripon, a devoted Roman Catholic, sat at the same table with Mr. Lloyd George, the apostle of Nonconformity, the familiar question presented unusual difficulties, and there were moments when agreement seemed impossible. Campbell-Bannerman was not among the partisans of any particular solution, but he was a warm friend and admirer of Mr. Birrell, who had this necessary task in hand; and his Scottish detachment made him a good arbiter in this English contention. The Cabinet were all but unanimous that English opinion was not ripe for the abolition of State religious instruction, and it considered that the provision of all-round facilities would either prove unworkable, owing to the multiplicity of sects, or convert the schools into cockpits of rival theologies. Further, there was the objection that this plan would not meet the views of either Roman or Anglican Catholics, who held that religion should penetrate the school-teaching at all hours and not be relegated to the position of an 'extra' on the time-table.

The solution adopted was the inevitable compromise. All the non-provided schools were to be transferred to the local authorities, and in all alike—'transferred,' or 'non-provided,' and 'provided'[1]—Cowper-Temple teaching was to be the normal religious instruction, and to be given by the teacher unless he pleaded conscientious objection. In the transferred schools, but not in the others, facilities were to be given for special denominational teaching on two mornings in the week, but this was not to be given at the cost of the State or by the regular teachers. This last

[1] Campbell-Bannerman greatly disliked the terminology of the Board of Education and its Bills. Among his papers is a pencilled minute: 'We look to the Board of Education for a high example in graceful and intelligible language. How elegant are these!

"Non-provided Schools."

"Facilities Instruction."'—H. C.-B.

CHAP. XXXI. 1906. 'provision was put in to meet the point that, if the teacher had the option, he would be practically under compulsion, since in most cases he would be unable to decline without disqualifying himself for the appointment. A further provision—the famous Clause IV.—was added to meet the case of the homogeneous schools, Roman Catholic or Anglican. Where the authorities were satisfied, after public inquiry, that at least four-fifths of the parents desired it, the school might remain denominational in character even though maintained out of public funds. For the rest, while the local authority was to assume all responsibility for the fabric, the buildings were to remain at the disposal of their owners in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays. A Special Education Council was set up for Wales.

'The Cabinet believes,' said the Prime Minister, in reporting to the King at the end of March, 'that while remedying the injustice in the previous Act which they have promised to remove, the provisions in the Bill will meet the reasonable desires of moderate Churchmen, especially of laymen, and will at the same time guard as far as possible the interests of Catholic Schools.' The moderate Churchmen and Catholics who recognised these good intentions were, unfortunately, few and far between. When Mr. Birrell introduced the Bill on April 9, criticism was at once vocal, and before the House rose for the Easter recess it was plain that all the forces of the Church and the Tory Party were to be mobilised against it. Before the Bill was printed, the Bishops met at Lambeth and, having decided on uncompromising opposition, began straightway to fulminate in their dioceses against the 'confiscation' and 'tyranny' of the proposed measure. The Bishop of London announced a mass meeting at the Albert Hall, and urged his rural deans to be up and doing. The Roman Catholics, unpersuaded by Lord Ripon, refused to accept Clause IV. in satisfaction of their claims, and joined the Anglicans in their denunciations. Alone among his brethren, the Bishop of Hereford pleaded for caution and

moderation before yielding to the 'wild agitation' in progress. Nonconformist opinion, as expressed by the Free Church Council, was on the whole favourable, but Labour, voiced by Mr. Keir Hardie, called for complete secularisation, and some Radical High Churchmen, like Mr. Masterman, declared openly that they preferred the secular solution to the further establishment of Cowper-Templeism proposed in the Bill. Mr. Birrell, as the event proved, was justified in claiming that the Liberal Party was behind the Bill, but it very soon became evident that the Opposition was prepared to risk everything for its destruction.

In the circumstances it became more important than ever to push forward with other Bills. It was a recognised principle of Liberal strategy in these times to send as many important Bills as possible simultaneously to the House of Lords on the assumption that that Chamber, however greatly daring, would not in a single session venture to destroy more than one first-class measure passed by a great majority in the House of Commons. Liberals, seeing their overwhelming predominance in the House of Commons, found it difficult to believe that the Peers would venture even the one stroke, but at least it seemed certain that they would not do more in a single session. So the Cabinet was urged to go ahead with the two other most controversial Bills of the session, the Trade Disputes Bill and the Plural Voting Bill, and at least secure these before the Lords were ready for another attack. As to the first of these measures, it was generally agreed that a remedy must be found for the destruction by recent legal decisions of what since the Act of 1871 had been regarded without challenge as public policy in relation to Trade Unions. If these decisions stood and were binding on the courts, strikes were of doubtful legality and Trade Unions were exposed to being proceeded against under the law of conspiracy and their funds made liable for damages to employers. It was common ground that the presumptive meaning of the Act of 1871 must be restored; else it was

useless to talk further of the right of combination. There were three main points: the relaxation of the law of conspiracy, the legalisation of peaceful picketing, and the exemption of Trade Union funds. On the first two the Cabinet was agreed, on the third there was a sharp difference of opinion. The lawyers of the Cabinet wanted to proceed indirectly by restricting the law of agency, others were for the direct enactment which alone they thought would be safe against encroachment by the courts. With some misgiving the Cabinet took the lawyers' view and the Bill was introduced by the Attorney-General, Sir Lawson Walton, in the indirect form.[1]

There was dismay among the Labour members, who decided to proceed at once with a Bill of their own, which was moved on March 30 by Mr. W. Hudson. Campbell-Bannerman, who was always for the most direct approach to a given object, had doubted the wisdom of the Cabinet, and he now seized the opportunity to extricate the Government from what began to look like a serious difficulty by supporting Mr. Hudson's Bill, and intimating that the way was open to adjust the difference between that Bill and the Government Bill. An old parliamentarian looking on remarked that 'Machiavelli was not in it with the Prime Minister.' Some of his colleagues thought the same, and

[1] The original clause in the Bill as introduced was: 4.—(1) Where a Committee of a Trade Union constituted as hereinafter mentioned has been appointed to conduct, on behalf of the Union, a trade dispute, an action whereby it is sought to charge the funds of the Union with damages in respect of any tortious act committed in contemplation or furtherance of the trade dispute, shall not lie, unless the act was committed by the Committee or by some person acting under their authority:

Provided that a person shall not be deemed to have acted under the authority of the Committee if the act was an act or one of a class of acts expressly prohibited by a resolution of the Committee, or the Committee by resolution expressly repudiate the act as soon as it is brought to their knowledge.

In the Act as passed, Clause IV. reads: 'An action against a Trade Union, whether of workmen or masters, or against any members or officials thereof, on behalf of themselves and all other members of the Trade Union in respect of any tortious act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the Trade Union, shall not be entertained by any court.'

were not a little annoyed at what seemed to be a deliberate forcing of their hands. The truth was probably that the debate brought fresh light on a subject which in the Cabinet he had trusted to his technical advisers, and that with his accustomed directness he went straight to the point.

This legislation has been much criticised in subsequent years, but it is difficult to perceive any other way by which the policy of 1871 could be placed beyond challenge. If, as Campbell-Bannerman argued, the State had deliberately decided to equalise the conditions between Capital and Labour by sanctioning the right of combination and the liberty to strike, and if it had done this as the preferable alternative to the unrest, discontent, and possible revolutionary agitation which would have resulted from the denial of these liberties, then it was bound to implement its policy by exempting Trade Union funds and relaxing the law of conspiracy. Between the alternatives of reversing the whole policy of 1871 and giving it a clear definition which would prevent its being undermined by legal casuistry, there was no satisfactory middle way; and the 'indirect approach' could have no advantage over the direct unless, as the Labour members argued, it was another ingenious attempt to leave ajar the door which the Legislature professed to be closing. The original clause in the Government Bill which limited the liability of Trade Union funds for damages to cases where the act complained of was that of the executive committee of a union or of its authorised agent acting in accordance with its expressed or implied orders, or at least not contravening them, was hotly contested on this ground by the Labour Party, and Campbell-Bannerman agreed with them in thinking that it left a wide opening to litigation. The governing consideration was, in his view, that the State intended of set policy to exempt the Trade Union funds, and that the exceptions contemplated were not worth the friction they would cause. Strong resistance was expected, but for once it failed to materialise. It was apparently part of the Opposition strategy in these days not to throw a challenge to organised Labour, and on the

CHAP. XXXI. 1906.

third reading Mr. Balfour made a comparatively benevolent speech and permitted the Bill to pass without a division.[1]

Another Bill of the greatest importance to Labour, also passed this session, was the Workmen's Compensation Bill. This Bill, which was in the hands of the Home Secretary, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, was both an amending and a consolidating measure. It incorporated Mr. Chamberlain's Act of 1897, but brought in six million new workers, including fishermen, seamen and shipmasters; clerks, shop-assistants, postmen, and domestic servants. In regard to domestic servants Campbell-Bannerman played a characteristic part, by no means unlike that which he played on the Trade Disputes Bill. The Cabinet Committee were against their inclusion, and Ministers and Law Officers resisted amendments to bring them in up to the last hour of the Report stage. Then one day (Dec. 5) the Prime Minister strolled into the House and sat down to listen to the debate, knowing little or nothing about the subject. But his interest grew as he listened to the strong pleas from both sides of the House—from Lord Morpeth and Lord Robert Cecil on one side, and Mr. Donald Maclean and Mr. Keir Hardie on the other—and presently he astonished his colleagues by getting up and announcing, entirely on his own initiative and without consultation, that the Government accepted the amendment. This habit of forming strong views and acting on them without fear or hesitation again and again stood him in good stead, and, as in this case, his colleagues nearly always acknowledged that his instincts were as right as they were prompt.

Next in the order of contentious measures came the Plural Voting Bill, aimed against the anomaly which permitted one voter to record his vote in as many constituencies as he had qualifications. The Tory Party clung tenaciously to this last entrenchment of property, and were from the first day in arms against the Bill introduced by Mr. L. V. Harcourt on May 27, which compelled the voter to make his choice between his various qualifications. Immense

[1] House of Commons, Nov. 9.

ingenuity was expended in devising amendments to this simple proposal, and it soon became evident that it was marked down for slaughter in 'another place.' The House of Commons was now a roaring loom of legislative activity. To its three most contentious Bills the Government added a Merchant Shipping Bill, and private members a dozen more, of which some, like the Land Tenure Bill, were adopted and pushed forward by the Government. In the meantime, innumerable Committees and Commissions were at work exploring Canals and Waterways, the Feeding of School Children, the Miners' Eight-Hours Day, the duties of the Metropolitan Police, the rights and wrongs of Vivisection, the Welsh Church, Small Holdings, Industrial Diseases and other subjects on which legislation might be prepared for another session. Mr. Balfour had appeased his supporters the previous year by promising them that they should not be 'burdened by over-much legislation.' The new Prime Minister could not offer his party too much.

But in spite of these many diversions the Education Bill remained the predominant subject. The Opposition smothered it with amendments, and a drastic guillotine closure became necessary by the middle of June. Attacks came from every quarter of the compass, from politicians defending the 1902 settlement, from Roman Catholics and High Anglicans demanding the completely denominational school, from Labour members demanding the completely secular school, from the advocates of universal Cowper-Templeism, from the advocates of universal facilities. Mr. Chamberlain wanted all the State teaching to be secular, and all the denominations to have facilities, thereby affecting a rather perilous combination with the Churchmen who wished to make an end of Cowper-Templeism. Mr. Balfour wanted nothing but to destroy the Bill and maintain his own Act, and to that end was willing to accept all allies who would help him to make trouble for the Government. Even a hostile House of Commons was compelled to admire his extraordinary skill in taking advantage of the diversities of opinion and driving wedges between the

CHAP. XXXI. 1906. Government and its supporters. With imperturbable good nature Mr. Birrell fought his way through these entanglements, proving himself the equal of Lord Hugh Cecil in theological subtlety, and not much inferior to Mr. Balfour in parliamentary strategy. His task was no easy one. He had on one flank the Irish Party supporting Archbishop Bourne and the English Catholics, and on the other the English Nonconformists—127 strong in the House—who were from the beginning highly suspicious of Clause IV., which was plainly intended to make a considerable exception in favour of Roman Catholic and high denominational schools. Their alarm increased when, for the sake of peace, Mr. Birrell seemed to be making concessions which extended the scope of this exception ; and the Government had not a little difficulty in procuring its acceptance in the highly complicated form in which it finally emerged. On one point at all events the Government and its supporters would have no compromise. The abolition of tests for teachers should be clear and final, and Clause VII., inhibiting teachers in the ordinary transferred schools from giving denominational instruction, be passed unaltered, as it was eventually by 364 to 183.

For reasons that will appear a little later, Campbell-Bannerman took little part in these debates, and was well content to leave them to his English colleagues. But the Nonconformists trusted him implicitly and were willing to take from him concessions which they would probably have accepted from no one else, and he came in at the critical moment on Clause IV. to intimate that the Government intended to stand by it. His view, as he told the House on this occasion (June 26), was that, subject to this one exception, the Bill was in its broad aspects 'an undenominational one,' and that any settlement of the question, after the Voluntary Schools had become State-supported schools, must and could only be undenominational. He sympathised with teachers who honestly desired to give religious instruction according to the tenets of their Church, but their case, he held, should have been thought of by their

employers when Churchmen decided to quarter their schools on public funds, and it was not in reason that they should both relieve themselves at the expense of the public and expect the State-paid teachers to be at their disposal for the teaching of their particular tenets. Churchmen retorted that this argument did not apply to an option to teach, but a very large number of teachers were of opinion that the option was equivalent to compulsion, since it could not be refused without forfeiting their chance of appointment.

The Bill passed its third reading by a majority of 192 on July 30, and was given a second reading in the Lords before Parliament adjourned. In the month of August the question was suddenly complicated by a judgment in the Court of Appeal, which held that the West Riding County Council was justified in refusing to pay teachers in non-provided schools for religious instruction and in deducting from their salaries such portion as was deemed proportionate to the time spent on this instruction. This judgment, which upset what was plainly the intention and deliberate policy of the Act of 1902, caused consternation among Churchmen, and presented a delicate question to the Government. Should they accept it on the ground that it coincided with their own policy, and use it as a lever to bring the Opposition to terms, or should they appeal against it and take the question to the House of Lords? Some eager partisans were for accepting it and holding it in reserve as an alternative line of attack if the Lords destroyed the Government Bill, but Campbell-Bannerman was unhesitatingly of the other opinion. The public interest, in his opinion, forbade that the Government should permit the administrative confusion which must follow if the law were left unsettled, or that it should use a legal decision of doubtful validity to force the hands of its opponents. The Cabinet at once decided to appeal, and four months later (Dec. 14) the House of Lords by a unanimous decision upset the judgment of the Court of Appeal, and declared the payments for religious instruction to be obligatory on local authorities. The

position, therefore, was what all parties had supposed it to be, and if the Nonconformist grievance was to be redressed, it could only be by fresh legislation.

Up to the summer adjournment everything had gone well. The Prime Minister had proved himself more than equal to the task of handling the great and, as it seemed, unwieldy majority. No one at the end of July wished him anywhere else than on the front bench in the House of Commons. Praise was unstinted of his tact, his sagacity, his easy mastery of this tremendous machine. Circumstances generally had been propitious. An inherited surplus of £3,000,000 had enabled the Chancellor of the Exchequer to abolish the coal tax and take a penny off tea. The Naval Estimates for the current year had been reduced by £1,500,000—a reduction for which the credit was due to the previous Administration—and the Board of Admiralty, which meant Sir John Fisher, had consented to drop one Dreadnought out of the four which figured on the programme of their predecessors and to make another conditional on the results of the Hague Conference to take place the following year. Campbell-Bannerman himself was a warm defender of this principle of conditional programmes in naval construction, and spoke energetically in its favour in the debate on the Naval Estimates on July 27. At the War Office Mr. Haldane was incubating reforms, and on July 12 he had so far advanced as to be able to outline the main principles of the scheme which was to provide the Expeditionary Force, and eventually the Territorial Army; and in the meantime he had contrived to cut off the increases of expenditure contemplated by his predecessors, and to prepare the way for the considerable reductions which he thought compatible with greater efficiency. The Prime Minister, as usual, was vigilant for the Cardwellian principle, but from the beginning he took a benevolent interest in these schemes, and was agreeably surprised at the skill and industry which the new Secretary for War was putting into them, and at his remarkable aptitude for influencing the military mind.

At the end of February this year, Lord Ripon, the leader

in the House of Lords, for whom the Prime Minister had always a great affection and respect, had an attack of illness which led him to intimate that he might be compelled to seek relief from his duties. The reply came very promptly :— CHAP. XXXI. ÆT. 69.

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

10 DOWNING STREET, *March* 3, '06.—I need not tell you that your letter has given me very great concern. Your loyal and self-sacrificing acceptance of a position with few attractions was a great source of encouragement when the Government was formed, and I can never thank you enough for it. And I have felt great comfort in the knowledge that in so important a function of Government as that of Leader in the House of Lords there was one of unrivalled experience, immense knowledge of affairs, and unimpeachable soundness of opinion. I had hoped that things were going quietly and that you were not overstrained, when came the painful attack you described to me last week. And I had gathered that those who were present at Wednesday's Cabinet thought you quite recovered. But I admit that the advice of your two physicians is difficult to get over.

Still your presence among us gives such strength—and prestige—to the Cabinet that I am sure our colleagues would, equally with myself, part with you with the most profound regret and reluctance. I hope you will allow me to see whether we may not assure for you immunity from the greater worries and responsibilities, so that we may still have the benefit of your counsel. Do let me have a little time to think and consult, and I will let you know as soon as I can.

It has been unfortunate that I have been secluded by a stupid cold, and have seen very few people ; but I hope now to be free to go about.

Lord Ripon fortunately recovered and was able to continue in office until October 1908, when Campbell-Bannerman himself had passed from the scene. In the year 1907 he again had doubts whether his age and infirmities would permit him to go on, and Campbell-Bannerman sent him a similar reply :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

10 DOWNING STREET, *March* 12, '07.—I was alarmed by the earlier portion of your letter, in which you gave reasons which I

CHAP. XXXI. 1906.

cannot deny are forcible for contemplating some relief from your public duties in connection with the Government. But the latter part of it reassured me, and I breathed again. I am deeply sensible of the sacrifices you have already made, and I owe you more than any one can know on account of the uncomplaining devotion which has kept you at your post in such trying circumstances. But gratitude for the past only whets my appetite for your help in the future. I most earnestly hope that you will remain among us, setting us an example, keeping us to principles when we are tempted to stray, and by your wise and kindly spirit winning the affectionate admiration of all around you. That you are willing to go on with all the drudgery and worry is splendid—and I gratefully accept your proposal to let things go on the present footing, for this session at least.

I really cannot express my deep obligation to you.

There was no man with whom he was in more intimate association during his Prime Ministership or whose outlook on politics and social questions was more completely in accord with his own.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF LADY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

In great Trouble—His Wife's Illness—Her Character and View of Public Life—His Devotion to her—'The Authority'—Move to Downing Street—An Interval of Hope—Journey to Marienbad—Death at Marienbad—The Return Journey—A Broken Man—His first Heart Seizure.

CHAP. XXXII. ÆT. 69.

TO the outside observer, Campbell-Bannerman in June 1906 seemed to have achieved everything that ambition could desire. In reality, he was in great trouble. His wife, who was more to him than any public success, however glittering, was dangerously ill, and every hour that he could snatch from public duties by day or from sleep by night he spent in her sick-room. One night in Marienbad, when she was near her end, he was persuaded, much against his will, to take a full night's rest, and the next morning he said, 'How strange to have spent a whole night in bed; it has not happened to me for six months.' She had a prejudice past reasoning with against professional nurses, and from the time that her illness became critical she was pathetically dependent on his ministrations. Whenever she called he rose, and hour after hour in the nights he sat with her, soothing her pain, and giving her the food or medicine which sometimes she would take from no one's hand but his. 'More than once,' writes his secretary, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, 'I found him dozing over his letters in the morning, and though I did not take it seriously at the time, there can be no doubt that he was gradually exhausting himself and, as subsequent events proved, undermining his own strength.' Lady Campbell-Bannerman's illness was no easy decline to a painless end. She suffered from a complication of disorders attended by paroxysms

CHAP. XXXII. 1906.

of pain which he alone seemed able to relieve. As she suffered, so he suffered, but to him their relationship was sacred, and he spoke little of his anguish and anxiety even to those who saw him constantly in these days.

It has been said that his wife was his only intimate friend, and this in a sense was true. He used to speak of her as his final Court of Appeal, and there were certain matters in which no one was permitted to share or dispute her authority. How she would act, or, to speak more accurately, what would be the result of their joint deliberations, was a matter of extreme importance in certain emergencies. In 1898, when the question of the leadership was in doubt, it was supposed that her vote would be cast decisively against his embarking on that sea of trouble, with all the interruptions that it was bound to bring to the cherished routine of their lives, the departure for Marienbad in August, the autumn and winter in Scotland, the fixed period, not in any circumstances to be prolonged, of their residence in London. Yet she was unhesitatingly for taking the chance when it offered, though possibly without counting the cost to the full. Where he was concerned she often seemed to be divided against herself. She had an ambition for him far exceeding his ambition for himself, and was invariably for action when he seemed to be put upon or slighted. That on most occasions she would be for the fighting course was a sure prediction which was most signally verified in December 1905, when she returned from Scotland to declare 'no surrender' to those who wished him relegated to the House of Lords. Yet with all her zeal for his interests and her determination to see him reap his reward, she was often in rebellion against the conditions which were imperative if he was to succeed. She had no children to fill her time and thoughts when he was away, and her health prevented her from accompanying him when he went speech-making and sharing with him the triumphs and pleasures of popular applause. Very seldom was she seen even in the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Commons. The enforced solitude in the most companionable hours of the day, which is the



SIR HENRY AND LADY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN
AT BELMONT CASTLE, JANUARY 1906

p. 288

fate of the public man's wife, was always a trial to her, and hour after hour in the evenings she lay on her sofa watching the clock, and counting the minutes till he was due to return. Among her intimates she was sociable and friendly, but she greatly disliked some of the company which a successful politician must keep, and constantly set her face against certain kinds of London society in which she saw politicians immersed and, as she thought, engulfed. All this helped to the very serviceable kind of reputation for homeliness and simplicity which her husband enjoyed, but she had none of the political woman's zest in the public life, and her greatest happiness was always to have him to herself.

In later years, as her chronic illness became more serious and she more and more relied on his support, he was often sorely perplexed between the calls which were imperative on him as a public man and his strong reluctance to leave her even for a short time. Again and again, as I have recorded, the Whips were reduced to despair, both when he was leader of the Opposition and when he was Prime Minister, by a brief note to say that he was unable to come back to the House after dinner that evening. At one moment an ex-Cabinet conclave is postponed by a telegram from Calais to say that rough weather in the Channel makes it impossible for her to cross or for him to leave her; at another public meetings are remorselessly cancelled because her after-cure requires him to stay a fortnight longer abroad. Though not naturally an energetic man, he put himself to infinite trouble to combine his duty to her and his duty to the party and the public. More than once he took her by slow stages to Marienbad at the end of July, and then travelled straight back to London alone, to be in his place in the House of Commons, and after that took the first possible train to rejoin her at Marienbad. No trouble was too great for him, no fatigue too much, where she was concerned.

Some of his friends spoke of her as an exacting wife, but she was wholly devoted to him, and on his side there was no

CHAP. sense of compulsion or even of duty. If ever there was willing service it was his. His happiest days were those which he spent with her alone at Belmont, and he was absolutely honest when he spoke longingly of the time when they should be free to live their own lives. They were not merely husband and wife, but the best of comrades with the same likings and the same antipathies. She had a strong sense of humour and, what was equally important, the same taste in jokes that he had. The quip from him brought the quip from her; she entered with zest into the little *aperçus* of opponents and colleagues with which his talk was freely salted, and knew as well as he did the secret code 'Barnbougle' for Rosebery, 'Schopenhauer' for Haldane, 'The Nymph' for Harcourt, 'Woodthorne' for Fowler, 'Spec' for Spencer, 'Jupiter' for King Edward, which enabled the conversation to go on unchecked when the servants were in the room. She was not in any sense a 'political woman,' and he did not go to her for advice in the details of politics, but she had a keen eye for a situation in which character and personality were concerned, and she was incisive and generally just in her judgment of men and women. On innumerable little matters of style and method he asked her advice and generally took it. Between the years 1899 and 1904 I spent many hours with him on Sunday afternoons in his room on the third floor of No. 6 Grosvenor Place, and not infrequently he discussed with me a speech he was going to make in the country or in the House of Commons the following week. Occasionally I demurred to a phrase and suggested an alternative, but nearly always with the same result: 'We will refer it to the Authority, and she shall decide. Her judgment is infallible.'

She had for twenty years and more suffered from a complaint which, though it could be kept under by careful diet and treatment, was always dangerous. Its name was never mentioned between them, and when in 1902 it brought the paralytic stroke which is often one of its results, that also by a tacit understanding was described as 'neuritis.'

To the end he seemed to think it impossible that she could die before him, and when finally warned that he must expect the worst, he seemed dazed and incredulous, and more than once, as her strength ebbed and flowed, persuaded himself that she had 'turned the corner' back to life. In fact her illness was in its last stage when he became Prime Minister, and she could take little part in his new mode of life. She moved very reluctantly from Belgrave Square to 10 Downing Street, which she frankly disliked. She felt no thrill at being the tenant of this seat of the mighty, and was keenly alive to its dinginess and inconvenience. 'It is a house of doom,' she said as she moved in. But she made a heroic effort to do her duty as hostess at the great evening party which he gave at the beginning of the session. Dressing was torture to her; she could not stand for more than a few minutes, and sat propped up for two hours endeavouring to be agreeable, and bravely concealing the pain she was suffering. For a few weeks she was no worse, and at Easter they went together to their old resort, the Lord Warden Hotel at Dover. There he himself had the bad luck to be laid up with a feverish cold, and the visit was less than its usual success. Soon after their return to Downing Street she became alarmingly ill, and he had at last to face the fact that her life was seriously in danger. For many days in June he scarcely left the house, except for the hour at question-time in the House of Commons and not always for that; and for most of the time he was in her sick-room. Towards the end of April Dr. Ott was summoned from Marienbad, and once again that trusted physician seemed to have worked a miracle. At the end of the month she was surprisingly, unexpectedly better, and to his enormous relief was pronounced out of danger.

In July he took up his parliamentary work again and kept a large number of political and social engagements. His spirits rose and, with his usual optimism, he believed her permanently better. The question now to be decided was whether the usual journey to Marienbad could be risked.

CHAP. XXXII. 1906.

She greatly desired it and was confident that it was the one thing needed to restore her. The doctors consented, provided the journey was taken by easy stages. They were five days on the road, waiting at Dover for a propitious crossing and travelling only by day. With them was Miss Thorbjorn, a Swedish lady and trained masseuse, to whose tender regard and skilful care Lady Campbell-Bannerman owed much in the months of her last illness, and in whom both she and her husband found always a cheerful friend and companion. Miss Thorbjorn returned afterwards to Belmont with Sir Henry. Marienbad was reached on August 13, and, though greatly fatigued by the journey, the patient revived a little and for the next ten days seemed to be better, but this was only a last flicker, and at length her husband had to face the fact that she was beyond hope. Dr. Ott at Marienbad, Dr. Burnet, summoned from London, Dr. Malcolm Morris, then staying at Marienbad and brought into consultation, could give no other verdict.

The scene outside was all glitter and sunlight. King Edward had arrived on the 16th, and with him came a crowd from the high world, courtiers, ambassadors, and the fashionable and ambitious who follow in the wake of royalty. It was impossible to take things simply or quietly. The King and his Prime Minister were at the centre of this buzzing hive, with a great company of journalists watching them. There were dinners with the King, a lunch to the King, talks to the King and a score of foreign magnates, including King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, to whom the Prime Minister was bound to be civil. For the ten days before the blow fell he was in the thick of it, and no one, when he was in the mood, entered with more zest into this kind of life. Morning and afternoon he sallied out, bringing back a store of humorous gossip and shrewd observation to amuse his invalid. More than ever at this time he seemed to have established a perfect understanding with King Edward, who was entertained by his talk and found safety in his sterling character. No one could have been kinder

or more considerate than the King in the dark hours which were now to follow.

She died on August 30, and his secretary, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, who was with him at this time, has described the last days in a passage which he permits me to borrow from his diary :—

We had our meals in the sitting-room with the door to the bedroom where she lay left ajar. In the course of a meal he would get up two or three times in response to a call from the next room. Never once did he do this like a man disturbed. Every time he sprang up in the most alert way as if to do something he very much wanted. He was buoyed up by the slightest improvement, but as the days passed it became obvious that the end was not far off. I had walks with Dr. Burnet, and I soon saw it was a question of days. On Aug. 30, Dr. Ott, who was in charge, told me to remain at the hotel, so I wrote letters in the sitting-room, while C.-B. tried to read. At 4 he was called into the bedroom and I was sent off for some oxygen. I waited in the sitting-room after my return. It was a blazing summer afternoon, the street outside was silent except for the clicking of the horses' hoofs in the carriages standing outside. The only other sound was the gradually slackening breath of the dying woman, which was quite audible through the half-open door. She died about 5 o'clock. . . .

I went up and had a long talk with King Edward on the balcony of his hotel. He was very human and only wanted to do just what C.-B. would like him to do. He showed real concern and affection and gave far less trouble than some of the other people I had to interview. My most difficult job, and one which had its humorous side, was getting hold of the two parsons, the Austrian pastor and the British chaplain. The former did not understand a syllable of English, the latter not a syllable of German. I managed, however, to arrange a service and hymns, and allotted to each certain parts of it.

The service took place in the cemetery where the body had been embalmed. It was really very impressive yet quite simple. King Edward came and other great people, but somehow they did not spoil it, or make it official and formal. C.-B. was intensely pleased and moved by it and felt it was just what she would have liked. Then the long, hot, wearisome journey home began. It must have been torture for him, but he never complained. For the greater part he just sat idly thinking. Finally we arrived

CHAP. XXXII. 1906. in Downing Street on the hottest day I ever remember. Then came the journey to Scotland and the funeral at Meigle on Sept. 5. Although here he was surrounded by his friends and Scottish neighbours, C.-B. felt this part of the ceremony an anti-climax. He told me it was all over for him in the little service in the chapel at Marienbad.

Mr. Morley and Mr. Thomas Shaw were among the political friends who gathered by the graveside, and both of them remained with him that night at Belmont, and the latter for some days later, treating him, as Mr. Ponsonby says, 'with a most charming and courteous deference and sympathy, and at the same time affection.'

King Edward had written to him at once, on hearing of his wife's death :—

King Edward to Campbell-Bannerman

MARIENBAD, *August* 30, 1906.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—The sad news has just reached me that Lady Campbell-Bannerman has passed away, and although I hardly like intruding so soon on your great grief, still I am anxious to express my warmest sympathy with you at the great loss you have sustained. I know how great your mutual devotion was, and what a blank the departed one will leave in your home. Still I feel sure that you can now only wish that your beloved wife may be at peace and rest, and free from all further suffering and pain.

All the British community here will, I know, share the same feelings for you on this most truly sad occasion which I entertain.—Believe me, Very sincerely yours, EDWARD R. & I.

On his return to Belmont, telegrams, letters and resolutions of condolence descended on him in an unceasing stream, and the extraordinary number and range of them showed how at length he had won the affection of the British people. To most of these he could do no more than send a brief word of thanks, but he wrote characteristically to certain of his old friends :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Ripon

BELMONT, *Sept.* 8, '06.—I cannot sufficiently thank you for

the kindness of your letter of condolence and also for your attendance at the funeral service.

I have many consolatory facts for which I am grateful to God —the fact that her end was perfectly peaceful and undisturbed; the fact that she is now at rest after her long years of suffering; the fact that I can now look back behind that long tract and recall her as she was in her brighter days; the extraordinary demonstration of sorrow and sympathy which the circumstances have evoked (most remarkable of all in Marienbad, where one may say the whole place was in tears)—these are among the things which it is pleasant to look upon. I feel them deeply.

I mean to stay here, mainly, till the middle of next month. It is splendid air, a quiet life, and I shall not be alone.

Campbell-Bannerman to Sir Ralph Knox

BELMONT, *Sept.* 11, '06.—I have been much touched by your letter. We are indeed great and old friends, and my wife knew how much I owed to you and was always glad to see you.

She has been sacrificed to my public life. We both wished and strove to get out of it, but could not. London always sapped her strength, and we both longed for a quiet life with each other, but, latterly especially, circumstances were too strong for us, and of course, for the last two or three years, her longing to escape was mingled with a keen desire to see me vindicated; as she said, to see me 'get my reward.' The only pleasure I had in it was that it pleased her; any praise I deserve is due to her.

Now I am alone in the world. But, with God's help, I will go on, as she would have had me to go on, until such forces as without her I can muster fail altogether. I must 'dree my weird' alone. And in this I am mightily aided by kind words from old and tried friends like yourself, and also not a little soothed and encouraged by the general kindness shown to me on all hands.

I am very sorry to hear that Lady Knox is so suffering—knowing what the trial is I can feel for you, and for her.[1] —Always yours, H. C.-B.

[1] To the same correspondent he had occasion to write three weeks later:—

BELMONT CASTLE, MEIGLE, SCOTLAND,
8th October 1906.

MY DEAR KNOX,—Just a word to say how sincerely I grieve for you now that the blow which you told me was impending has fallen. I know in bitter experience what it is. May God bless and comfort you and yours. —Your old friend, H. C.-B.

CHAP. XXXII. 1906.

In the diary in which he kept the brief record of his movements he has written, on the day August 30, 'Eheu!' and against the same day in 1907, 'Dies illa lacrimabilis.' Yet to the world he kept a brave and cheerful face, being utterly incapable, as Mr. Ponsonby says, 'of putting on a *visage d'événement.*' In greeting friends and guests he could not assume an expression of woe. If he was pleased to see them, he showed his pleasure with smiles, and even merriment, never for a moment thinking that an expression of sadness and dejection might be expected of him. An acquaintance was even heard to say that he did not feel the loss of his wife, so cheerful did he seem. And yet, after talking and laughing in company, he would be found upstairs in his study with his head in his hands, sobbing. 'He was not only miserable but absolutely broken,' says Mr. Ponsonby; 'far more broken than I realised at the time.' But if he could find amusement or distraction he welcomed it, and was, as usual, incapable of pose or of assuming artificial airs which most people, thinking of the outward impression they were making, might quite pardonably display. He went into no retreat such as convention imposes upon widowers, and it cheered him to move freely among his friends and neighbours. On the day after the funeral he went to Airlie Castle to call on his old friend Lady Airlie, and Mr. Ponsonby, who was with him, remembers that when Lady Airlie inquired whether he was not a little afraid of his 'unwieldy majority' he burst out with a great eulogy of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons. They meant business; they were not playing the party game but really believed in what they advocated; they were full of conviction and seriousness, a new type for the House of Commons, a great power, and they were most reasonable when he asked them to have patience and go forward steadily. Other solace he found in long talks with Mr. Morley, going back over old times and discussing the characters, infirmities, and qualities of eminent men, opponents and colleagues. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Hereford, Lord Loreburn, Mr. Thomas Shaw,

and Mr. and Lady Marjorie Sinclair also paid him brief visits at this time, and outwardly he bore himself bravely. He was nevertheless mortally stricken and the seeds of his own fatal illness were sown. On the 2nd of October at Belmont he had the first of the heart attacks which during the next eighteen months were gradually to sap his strength. 'Blood pressure combined with cardiac asthma, and liable to develop rather alarming symptoms owing to his constitution having been undermined' was the diagnosis. Fortunately not a word of it reached the public ears. At first he felt incapable of resuming his work and even spoke of resigning, but this mood quickly passed and within a few days his courage returned, and with it his determination to go on at least for 'the trial trip' of the autumn session.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE LORDS AND THE EDUCATION BILL

The House of Lords and the Education Bill—Turning it inside out—The Government and the Changeling—King Edward's Anxiety—Efforts in Conciliation—The Archbishop of Canterbury's Attitude—A Sick-bed Interview—The Final Rock of Stumbling—The Government's Dilemma—A New Way of Dealing with Lords' Amendments—More Letters from King Edward—Negotiations behind the Scenes—the Killing of the Bill—' A Way must be Found '—More Killing and Mauling—Dissolve or Fill the Cup ?—King Edward and Mr. Lloyd George—Results of the Session.

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906.

THIS time he recovered rapidly, but he remained quietly at Belmont for the next fortnight, receiving a few intimate friends and watching them shoot his coverts. On the 19th he returned to Downing Street and Parliament reassembled. Now began the long battle between Lords and Commons which, in Mr. Gladstone's phrase, ' went on to its issue ' in the Parliament Act of 1910.

Before it rose in August the House of Lords had given a second reading to the Education Bill, but Lord Lansdowne had said somewhat menacingly that the Peers ' did not part with one jot or tittle of their right to deal with it at some future day.' Trouble was expected, but the Opposition themselves, let alone the public, were scarcely prepared for what followed, when the Lords renewed their sittings in November and December. It is no figure of speech to say that they turned the Bill inside out. They reinstated for all teachers, head or assistant, the option to give denominational teaching, and carried the war into the enemy's camp by empowering the local authorities to provide this teaching in Council Schools, and permitting the teachers in these also to give it. They cancelled the

option which the Bill gave to local authorities in regard to religious teaching, and decreed that no school should get any public money unless some portion of the school hours were set aside every day for that purpose. They swept aside the restriction which limited the 'extended facilities' schools to urban areas, and compelled the local authorities to establish them in rural areas also where two-thirds of the parents demanded them. The denominational position being thus fortified, they strengthened the compulsion on local authorities to take over existing voluntary schools and maintain them out of the rates. Finally they cut out the proposed Welsh Council.

The attack came from all quarters with less than the concerted action that is usual on such occasions, and it is doubtful if the leaders of the Opposition grasped the cumulative result of their own proposals. Lord Crewe, who was in charge of the Bill on behalf of the Government, did all that mortal man could do, and won the warmest acknowledgments from the Prime Minister, but he was powerless against the forces opposed to him. In effect the Bill, as it returned to the Commons, was an extension of the Act of 1902, with all its vices, as the Government considered them, aggravated. From an undenominational it had, in the opinion of its authors, become a strongly denominational Bill. The extension of the 'extended facilities' schools from town to country and the compulsion put on the local authorities to consent to them would alone have altered the entire character of the Bill, and probably have converted what the Government meant to be the exception into the rule in a great many areas; and the claim of 'ordinary facilities' in Council Schools must, if conceded, have been a new conquest for the Church party over the whole field of elementary education. To the Ministerialists in the House of Commons and the country it seemed as if the Lords had played a huge practical joke upon them, and even Conservatives and Churchmen gasped at the audacity of their champions.

It was of course impossible, as the Lords well knew, for

the Government to think of adopting this changeling in lieu of their own child, and Mr. Birrell expressed the unanimous opinion of Liberals when he said, at the Colston Anchor Banquet on November 13, that they 'had no use for such a measure,' as the 'unrepresentative Assembly' were making the Bill, which now 'fostered and bolstered up denominationalism.' A fortnight later Campbell-Bannerman wrote a letter to Mr. Arthur Acland to be read by him to the special meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation over which he was presiding :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Arthur Acland

10 DOWNING STREET, *November* 27, 1906.

MY DEAR ACLAND,—I have heard with great interest of the special meeting of the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation which has been summoned to meet under your presidency to-day, and I am not surprised to learn that it promises to be the most representative and largely attended meeting of the kind that has assembled at any time during the last twenty years.

The crisis that has brought together representatives from every constituency in England and Wales was indeed foreseen. Every Liberal in the country has been well aware that the House of Lords would not be satisfied with the quiescent part which it has played during the long period of Unionist government, but that, on the contrary, it would hasten to assert itself as the instrument of Unionism so soon as the country had given its verdict against a Unionist Government and a Unionist policy. Still, we may plead guilty to a certain sense of surprise at the violence of the manifestation now that it has come.

The Education Bill, as it passed the House of Commons, was the Bill which the country demanded in unmistakable terms at the General Election. It now seems to have been turned into a travesty of its original form. As amended, it perpetuates, if it does not extend, the very grievances and wrongs that were fixed upon the country by the Act of 1902. In a word, it provides no settlement of the Education question.

Such a Bill, as Mr. Birrell has said, is of no use to us and no use to the country. I can only suppose that the Chamber which has so revised the terms of the national verdict presumes to know the mind of the country better than the country does itself and

to interpret that mind more correctly than the House of Commons.

Of one thing you may rest assured. We can have no tampering with the main principles on which our Bill is founded. If, within those limits, and without prejudice to the cause of education, an arrangement can be come to, well and good; if not, it will be for us to see that on this question of education and on others a way may be found by which the wishes of the country may be made to prevail.—Yours very truly,

H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

In the meantime, King Edward was watching with serious anxiety the development of the quarrel between the two Houses. On November 7, the Prime Minister had told him 'it was evident' that the House of Lords 'could not expect or indeed invite the House of Commons to accept any of the fundamental alterations, if they are persisted in, and a most regrettable situation would then arise.' But with his usual optimism he thought it improbable that the peers would persist, and he appears to have been somewhat encouraged in this scepticism by a talk which he had with the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom he met at Windsor during the week-end November 17-19. On the same occasion he repeated to the King that the situation was anxious and difficult, but made no further communication during the following week. By November 23 the King had become still more uneasy, and wrote sharply through Lord Knollys asking to be kept informed:—

Lord Knollys to Campbell-Bannerman

WINDSOR CASTLE, *Nov.* 23, 1906.

DEAR SIR HENRY,—The King desires me to thank you for your Cabinet letter of the 21st, in which you say that the meeting 'was entirely engaged with the arrangements of public business necessary for the conclusion of the Session.' His Majesty can, however, hardly suppose, after what you told him at Windsor, that no discussion took place on the probability of an important and serious conflict arising between the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

This is a matter which most closely concerns the Sovereign,

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906. and the King directs me to let you know that he is naturally anxious to be informed if any discussion occurred which will enable you to ascertain the views of your colleagues on the subject in question.—Believe me, Yours very truly,

KNOLLYS.

The King had now come up from Windsor to Buckingham Palace, and Campbell-Bannerman appears to have replied to this letter in person on the 24th. The following day the King wrote again with his own hand:—

King Edward to Campbell-Bannerman

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, *Nov.* 25, 1906.

In view of the serious state of affairs which would arise were a conflict to take place between the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the amendments passed by the former House on the Education Bill, the King feels certain that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman will agree with him in thinking it is most important that there should, if possible, be a compromise in respect to these amendments.

The King would, therefore, ask Sir Henry to consider whether it would not be highly desirable that Sir Henry should discuss the matter with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the hope that some *modus vivendi* on the line of mutual concessions could be found to avoid the threatened collision between the two Houses.

For the King thinks it would be deplorable, from a constitutional and every point of view, were such a conflict to occur.

The King proposes to send a copy of this letter to the Archbishop and would wish also to call Sir Henry's attention to pages 7 to 43 in the 2nd volume of *Archbishop Tait's Life*, when a contest was on the eve of taking place between the Houses on the Irish Church question in 1869. EDWARD R.

Campbell-Bannerman answered the same day:—

Campbell-Bannerman to King Edward

10 DOWNING STREET, *Nov.* 25, '06.—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman presents his humble duty and begs to acknowledge the receipt of Your Majesty's letter. He will at once place himself at the disposition of the Archbishop, in accordance with Your Majesty's desire, and will endeavour in whatever seems to be the most effective way to advance the prospect of an arrangement. He has the advantage, owing to Your Majesty's kindness, of

having had a very full and frank discussion of the subject with His Grace at Windsor and probably matters have ripened somewhat in the meanwhile, but it may be that the time has not yet arrived for an actual accommodation. CHAP. XXXIII. ÆT. 70.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman begs leave again to assure Your Majesty of his earnest desire to avoid unnecessary friction or conflict, and to spare Your Majesty trouble and anxiety. He was aware broadly of the incidents of 1869, but has refreshed his knowledge by reading the passages in *Archbishop Tait's Life* to which Your Majesty has referred him.

The following evening (Nov. 26) Campbell-Bannerman saw the Archbishop at Lambeth, where he was unfortunately laid up with influenza, and the next morning he wrote an account of his interview to the King :—

Campbell-Bannerman to King Edward

10 DOWNING STREET, *Nov. 27*, '06.—Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, with his humble duty, knowing the deep interest which Your Majesty takes in the present Educational controversy and its possible future course, begs leave to say that last evening he visited the Archbishop, whom he regretted to find suffering from serious indisposition. This fact, however, did not prevent them from having a long discussion : but they both agreed that they could not carry it much further than they had gone at Windsor a week ago.

The Archbishop showed, as usual, a most fair and conciliatory spirit. Practically the principal point on which His Grace insisted as all-important was that the ordinary teacher should not be prevented from giving, if he were willing to do so, the special and distinctive religious teaching. Your Majesty's Government, on the other part, thinks that this would be inadmissible in its full extent, because it would leave the voluntary denominational schools practically as they now are in this respect with all their powers and privileges notwithstanding their being nominally under the control of the local authority, who would pay rent to the Church for their schools. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman gathers that with the Archbishop this is the main point of difference.

They were both in agreement that while the Upper House considers the Bill on Report, the representatives of the Government should maintain their quiescent and merely observant

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906.

attitude. But the Archbishop promised to inform Sir Henry of any new incident or suggestion, while the latter on his part gave his assurance of the great desire he had for conciliation and arrangement.

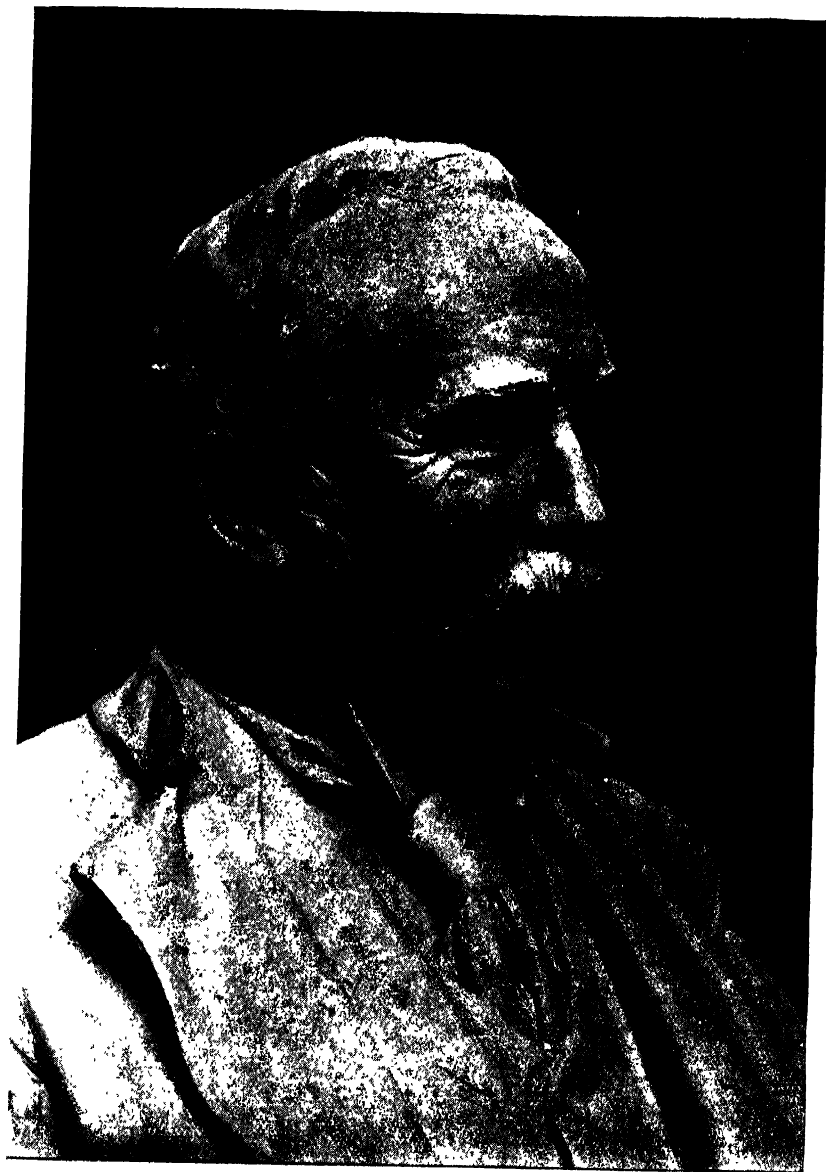
Again the King wrote with his own hand :—

King Edward to Campbell-Bannerman

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, *Nov.* 27, '06.—The King has received Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's letter of 27th inst. this evening and is greatly interested in learning the result of his interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who the King greatly regrets to learn is so indisposed.

The King quite sees the difficulty of the position of his Government and of the Primate, but from the last paragraph of the Prime Minister's letter the King is glad to learn from Sir Henry's evident wish for consideration that an arrangement may yet be possible which would prevent a collision between the two Houses of Parliament. EDWARD R.

The Archbishop himself was in a difficult position. He had played a leading part in amending the Bill, and his flock also, like the Radicals on the other side, were in a state of alarm lest what they had gained in public should be given away in private negotiation. The press of both parties raged outside, and called upon their champions to stand firm. On November 28 he wrote a long letter to Campbell-Bannerman from his sick-bed, and enclosed a memorandum containing his thoughts on the situation. The question, he said in this memorandum, was one of 'straightforwardness, of common sense, and of reasonable fairness all round. No vital principles, constitutional or religious, are necessarily imperilled by anything which is now outstanding as a point of divergence.' This seemed hopeful, but there followed an earnest and eloquent plea for the freedom of the teachers to give denominational teaching, which led to the conclusion that the Church would not and could not yield on this point. Here was the final rock of stumbling on which neither side was prepared to give way to the other. To the Radical and Nonconformist



SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN IN CAMBRIDGE LL.D. GOWN, 1907

HEAD AS IN PLASTER CAST FOR THE BUST BY MR. PAUL MONTFORD NOW BELONGING TO MR. J. HUGH CAMPBELL OF STRACATHRO

p. 343

it seemed intolerable that the Church should look to the State for the complete maintenance of her schools and yet expect to retain her right of appointing teachers—now become Civil Servants—who could be relied upon to teach her doctrines. To the Churchmen it seemed a 'grievous wrong' that men and women who had all their lives given this teaching and considered it the 'chief of their privileges' as teachers to do so should suddenly be deprived of the right of even offering to give it. Churchmen insisted that it was a free-will service cheerfully rendered by teachers, who had the power to decline it if conscience forbade; Liberals and Radicals retorted, with an immense number of teachers behind them, that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the teacher who declined the religious instruction in a Church school would lose his appointment, and that the only way of setting him free was to disallow the option. There was in reality no compromise possible between these two positions, and the Church from the beginning had the enormous advantage of being in possession, with the House of Lords behind it and the leader of Opposition keenly concerned to defend his own legislation of 1902. In such circumstances the Archbishop was not, like his predecessor in 1869, in a position (even if he had been willing) to make the sacrifice which could alone have saved the situation, and on this main issue he had already gone too far to withdraw.

II

The Lords passed the third reading of the amended Bill on December 6, and their completed work was now before the Ministers. It presented them with an extraordinary dilemma. To take the Lords' amendments *seriatim*, according to the ordinary practice, and gradually to recover their own Bill from the disguises and disfigurements now piled upon it, would have been a labour of weeks, perhaps of months, and have necessitated the reopening of the entire controversy from its first stage to its last. An angry party was in no mood for this penance, which would,

moreover, have wrought confusion in all plans for the coming session, without any assurance that the Bill would be saved in the end. In the circumstances the Cabinet decided on the admittedly novel course of rejecting the Lords' amendments *en bloc* and relying on private negotiations to save the Bill, if it could be saved. To them and their party this seemed the bold and proper retort, and if it was without precedent, so was the treatment of their Bill. On Dec. 8, the Prime Minister conveyed this decision to the King, who replied in his own hand the following day :—

King Edward to Campbell-Bannerman

SANDRINGHAM, *Dec.* 9, '06.—The King thanks Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman for his Cabinet letter of yesterday, which he received last night. He confesses he does not quite see where the spirit of concession ' comes in ' in the proposal of the Cabinet, and he is afraid, from what Sir Henry says, that the chances of a compromise are not very bright. He moreover doubts whether the adoption of so drastic and novel a measure as the rejection *en bloc* of the whole of the amendments of the House of Lords will be regarded by them as a desire on the part of the House of Commons to arrive at an amicable conclusion.

Sir Henry says that the Minister for Education must in the first place make a full general statement of the case in the House of Commons to-morrow and possibly indicate the provisions in which some material concessions—quite vaguely described—might be considered. He adds that these indications cannot be made at all unless the Government have reason to believe that they will be accepted as the price of the rejection of all the other amendments!

The King does not, however, understand how the Government is to know whether they will or will not be accepted by the Opposition unless the Cabinet put themselves into communication with Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Balfour previous to Mr. Birrell's speech.

Sir Henry may have already done so, but he makes no allusion to this point in his letters, and should the King be correct in his surmise, he hopes that Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman will arrange a meeting with them before the commencement of the debate.

To this Campbell-Bannerman replied :—

Campbell-Bannerman to King Edward

10 DOWNING STREET, *Dec.* 10, '06.—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, with his humble duty, begs to thank Your Majesty for the letter received this morning.

While anxious not to place too high the chance of a harmonious solution of the difficulty, he assures Your Majesty that that chance still exists and has gained rather than lost during the last few days. On the rising of the Cabinet on Friday, steps were taken to sound one or two leading members of the Opposition, but owing to the general absence of members of the two Houses on Saturday and Sunday, it was doubtful whether this could be accomplished, and this was the reason why Sir Henry did not mention that intention to Your Majesty.

Lord Lansdowne has, however, been seen this morning by Lord Crewe and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who explained the reasons for the course of returning the Amended Bill without detailed discussion and of inviting further changes in it, and also indicated the points on which concessions would be considered. Lord Lansdowne of course reserved his opinion, but they were satisfied with the interview and with his attitude.

Your Majesty will bear in mind that very leading members of the Opposition have denounced the Bill in unmeasured language and that not a single Bishop voted for it, even amended by their own wishes as it has been. It, therefore, behoves the Government, whose desire is to save the Bill, and thus settle the conflict at least for a time, to proceed with the utmost caution lest they 'give away' themselves and their friends in vain. The procedure that they have followed has this object in view and they have good hopes of success.

III

It is not in doubt that Campbell-Bannerman greatly desired to save the Bill both for its own sake and to spare his Government the embarrassment which followed from its rejection. But the atmosphere was not favourable to conciliation. The great Liberal majority in the House of Commons were hotly incensed at what they held to be an unheard-of challenge to the new Parliament. The Government, in their view, had gone right up to, if not beyond, the limits of concession when the Bill was passing through their House, and the Lords had replied by flouting them in

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906. a manner which not only made further concessions impossible, but required the instant enlargement of the issue to cover the whole question of the relations of the two Houses. Lord Lansdowne, in the third reading debate in the House of Lords, had left the door ajar to a compromise, and Mr. Birrell, to whom it fell to announce the decision of the Cabinet in the House of Commons on December 10, was careful not to close it. But he necessarily used plain language about the proceedings 'in another place.' He declared that the Bill as now amended was nobody's Bill, certainly not the Government's, and probably not in any real sense the Bill of the Lords. He said that the amendments had altered its whole character and had vitally impaired both the freedom from tests and the principle of popular control. Mr. Balfour replied with equal warmth, denouncing the Government for denying free discussion to the Lords' amendments, and declaring that they were necessary to give effect to 'parental control,' which the Government themselves had admitted.

The Archbishop still lay ill at Lambeth, but on reading the reports of this debate he wrote a distressed letter to the Prime Minister, expressing his 'keen feeling of depression on reading Birrell's speech,' and declaring 'the general tone of his utterance' to be 'of a sort to make it extraordinarily difficult for the House of Lords to recede from their position.' Throughout the speech he saw 'a sort of demand that the House should come almost apologetically and "hat in hand" to ask the Government to listen to its proposals.' 'Very much—perhaps almost everything,' he continued, 'may turn upon your own speech to-day. Those who, like myself, desire a peaceful solution, if it can be got on fair and reasonable terms, have a difficult cause to maintain, and it will at once become a hopeless cause if the Prime Minister does not help us by the tone and manner as well as by the matter of his reference to the position, the work, and the policy of the House of Lords.' The Prime Minister did his best, and when the debate was resumed in the Commons on December 11 his 'tone and manner' were

unexceptionable. While explaining carefully the reasons which made it impossible for the Commons to take the amendments *seriatim*, he made an appeal to Mr. Balfour, 'the Director in Chief,' the 'man having authority over the two Houses,' to say whether he wished to save the Bill, and got a vehement reply, in which the speaker sought to throw on the Government the onus of killing it, but left Ministerialists under the strong impression that his influence was being and would be used against any concessions that might save it. So far as 'tone and manner went,' the aggression on this occasion came from the Opposition, and good party men were not a little disturbed by the meekness displayed on the Government bench. Before the evening was out Ministerialists had made up their minds that Mr. Balfour meant to kill the Bill, and strongly warned the Government against proposing concessions which would damage their credit without conciliating their opponents. On the other side, the National Society and the Church Schools Emergency League applied all possible pressure to stiffen the Lords and the Opposition.

Negotiations in which Lord Lansdowne, Lord Crewe, Lord Cawdor, and Mr. Birrell played the chief parts continued behind the scenes for the next four days, but always tending to the irreducible minimum which neither side would yield. The Government offered to substitute three-fourths for four-fifths as the majority of parents required for an 'extended facilities' school, and to waive the stipulation of 'vacant places elsewhere' if less than ten parents demanded them. They also consented to include future as well as present voluntary schools under the 'extended facilities' clause, thus giving the denominations a chance of establishing such schools and making them a charge on the estate. Further, they agreed that in such schools the local authority should consult with the parents' committees and appoint teachers acceptable to them, and that in all schools the attendance of children should be compulsory during the hours of religious instruction unless a parent withheld his child to 'attend some form of religious or moral instruction

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906. elsewhere.' They even yielded on the teacher question so far as to permit assistant-teachers to be employed in denominational teaching except in single-school districts, and even in these if the school provided accommodation for more than 250 children and the local authority thought that the circumstances justified the permission. Nonconformists said flatly that with these large encroachments on their principle of the test-free teacher, the Bill was no longer worth passing, but the Opposition were unappeasable, and when the House of Lords met again on Dec. 17 it was known that the Bill was *in extremis*.

There was some fencing before the end came. At the end Lord Lansdowne seemed to shrink from delivering the final blow, and contented himself on the first day with a resolution protesting against the procedure of the Government as unknown to the Constitution, and inviting the House to adjourn until they heard further from the Government upon its attitude to the amendments in detail. At the same time he renewed the invitation to a compromise. On the Monday evening, after the House adjourned, a fresh effort was made, and on Wednesday morning the conciliators were sanguine that an agreement was at hand. It was rumoured that the only question now outstanding was that of the head teachers' option to give the denominational instruction in transferred schools, and that a compromise was possible even on that. The story goes that at this moment a draft compromise was submitted by the other Unionist leaders to Mr. Balfour, who, like the Archbishop, was laid up with influenza.[1] Whatever may have happened to it in the sick-room, it never saw the light. When the House of Lords reassembled on the afternoon of Wednesday, Lord Lansdowne proceeded at once to move that 'the House do insist on its amendments.' The freedom of the teachers was, he declared, the key of the position, and in refusing complete freedom the Government had raised an insuperable obstacle to peace. Lord Crewe retorted that no such concessions as were now

[1] Annual Register, 1906, p. 248.

proposed would ever be offered again from the Liberal side, and that, having been rejected, they must be considered 'gone and cleared away.' In a spirited peroration he declared that the responsibility for wrecking the Bill rested wholly with the Opposition and the bench of Bishops, who had 'chosen war in this matter rather than peace.' In the debate that followed the Duke of Devonshire definitely dissociated himself from the Opposition, and Lord Goschen expressed doubts, but Lord Lansdowne's motion was carried by 142 to 53.[1]

The Prime Minister explained the situation to the King in a letter written after the next day's Cabinet. The Opposition, he said, 'demand liberty to teach dogmas for head teachers as assistant-teachers (1) in all schools large and small in town or country, and (2) with or without the consent of the local authority. Such a scheme would imply the continuance of all the present denominational schools with the addition of a rent being paid for them. The purpose for which the Bill was introduced was the exact opposite of this, and, therefore, the Cabinet cannot hope to save the Bill.' Nothing now remained but the final scene in the House of Commons, where Campbell-Bannerman himself pronounced the funeral oration in words which announced the beginning of a new phase in the controversy between parties :—

It is plainly intolerable that a second Chamber should, while one party in the State is in power, be its willing servant, and when that party has received unmistakable and emphatic condemnation by the country, be able itself to neutralise and thwart and distort the policy which the electors have shown they approve. That is a state of things to which for the nonce we must submit. A settlement of this great question of education has been prevented, and for that calamity we know, and the country knows, on whom is the responsibility. But the resources of the Constitution are not wholly exhausted. The resources of the House of

[1] The Archbishop of Canterbury and seven other Bishops voted with Lord Lansdowne on this occasion, but the remainder of the Bishops abstained with the exception of the Bishop of Hereford, who supported the Government.

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906. Commons are not exhausted, and I say with conviction a way must be found, and a way will be found, by which the will of the people, expressed through their elected representatives in this House, will be made to prevail.

A tumult of cheering greeted the last words, and party men rejoiced heartily that the lists were now set for a struggle which would be more than a wrangling of theologians over the teaching of dogmas to little children. In the intervals between their reconstruction of the Education Bill, the Lords had found time to kill the Plural Voting Bill and severely to maul the Agricultural Holdings Bill and the Irish Town Tenants Bill, though, in deference to their respect for organised Labour, they had reluctantly spared the Trade Disputes Bill. Their audacity in the first session after the great Liberal rally in the country had surprised both themselves and their friends, and left the Government in a serious dilemma. Were they to dissolve and risk their great majority before it had done more than touch the fringe of its work, or were they to 'take it lying down,' and earn the discredit which falls on every Administration which is unable to resent an injury? A few, a very few, voices were for dissolution. The great majority were of opinion that the Education Bill was not big enough for the great issue which must be raised before the final battle was joined. Evidently the Tory Party were determined to use the House of Lords to set a limit to the legislation that could be carried by any Liberal or Radical majority. Very well, then, that limit must be explored to the utmost, or, in the phrase of the day, the 'cup filled' until a well-informed public could see and judge the full measure of their iniquities. And in the meantime the Prime Minister must fulfil his pledge to prepare a plan and find 'a way by which the will of the people expressed through their representatives in the House of Commons must be made to prevail.'

The Government, then, decided without hesitation to go on, but Campbell-Bannerman knew the risks and he looked them in the face. He knew that, in all probability, the

pendulum would swing back from the high level of 1906, and that every by-election lost would encourage the Lords and make his task more difficult. He realised how difficult it is for any Government to shape policies and issues on a preconceived plan to suit its own convenience. He remembered the election of 1895 and the failure to superimpose the question of the Lords at the eleventh hour upon policies which, for other reasons, had become unpopular. He passed from the scene before the cup was full, and more than once during the subsequent months he was heard to express a doubt whether he had been right in not taking up the challenge and going to the country again in December 1906.

IV

There was no doubt about the feeling in the Liberal camp. Denunciation thundered from the platform, and speakers returning from the country reported audiences everywhere at fever-pitch about the Lords. Mr. Lloyd George had thrown himself into this agitation with characteristic impetuosity, and on December 1 he made a speech to the Palmerston Club at Oxford which caught the eye of King Edward :—

> He would say that it was essential to the good government of the country that the road from the people to the throne should be cleared. It was intolerable that every petition of right that came from the people to their sovereign should be waylaid and mutilated in this fashion. . . . If the House of Lords persisted in its present policy, it would be a much larger measure than the Education Bill that would come up for consideration. It would come upon this issue, whether the country was to be governed by the King and the Peers or by the King and the people.—(Palmerston Club, Oxford, Dec. 1, 1906.)

This was not the first time since the formation of the Government that Mr. Lloyd George had found himself in trouble with high quarters. He had, in all innocence, announced to the House of Commons the appointment of a new Minister to answer for the proposed Education Council in Wales,

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906.

without conforming to the rule which requires the establishment of a new Ministry to be submitted first of all to the Sovereign. He had also more than once used language about the House of Lords which seemed to the King unbecoming in a Minister of the Crown. This Oxford speech, with its allusion to the throne, seemed an even more serious indiscretion, and the King now instructed Lord Knollys to write to the Prime Minister :—

Lord Knollys to Campbell-Bannerman

SANDRINGHAM, *Dec.* 3, '06.—The King desires me to point out to you that Mr. Lloyd George brought in His Majesty's name in the speech which he made against the House of Lords at Oxford on Saturday.

The King sees it is useless to attempt to prevent Mr. Lloyd George from attacking, as a Cabinet Minister, that branch of the Legislature, though His Majesty has more than once protested to you against it. He believes that at his request you remonstrated with Mr. Lloyd George as to these attacks, and it is difficult for the King to understand why he has paid no attention either to the wish of his Sovereign or to the warning addressed to him by the Head of the Government.

But His Majesty feels he has a right, and it is one on which he intends to insist, that Mr. Lloyd George shall not introduce the Sovereign's name into those violent tirades of his, and he asks you, as Prime Minister, to be so good as to take the necessary steps to prevent a repetition of this violation of constitutional practice and of good taste.

The King says he has no doubt he will be told that it was only a ' phrase,' but he must really make a point of his name being omitted even from a ' phrase ' in Mr. Lloyd George's invectives against the House of Lords.

Campbell-Bannerman's reply and Mr. Lloyd George's explanation were both conciliatory and ingenious :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Lord Knollys

10 DOWNING STREET, *Dec.* 4, '06.—I deeply regret to learn that the words of one of the King's Ministers have been such as to give offence to His Majesty, and on receipt of your letter I took the earliest occasion to see Mr. Lloyd George.

As you are aware, I had previously remonstrated with him as to his previous utterance, in which he seemed to exceed the usual limits in condemning the action of the House of Lords and in assailing the constitutional position of that House. In his speech at Oxford on Saturday I do not observe that he repeated this latter line of argument or said anything that was disrespectful of the Upper House, but he did speak, partly by way of banter (founded on the parable of the Good Samaritan) and partly in strong direct reprobation of the manner in which the Education Bill has been treated. When he spoke before his diatribe was not justified, as the Bill had not been considered in detail; but I venture to submit that, whether his language be thought exaggerated or not, he had at least some excuse for fault-finding, when we have seen the Bill—in Committee, and even more in Report—not only seriously amended but turned upside down. I may add that an amendment wantonly introduced into the Bill last night seems to me to show, not only by its effect but by its spirit, that compromise is almost, if not quite, impossible, and indeed is not intended by the Opposition in the House of Lords.

If this be so, I fear that we must be prepared for forcible language being employed generally, and even by Ministers; for it will be hard to restrain the feelings certain to be legitimately roused when a Bill so largely supported in the country, and passed in the Lower House by such a majority, is deliberately converted by the House of Lords into a measure whose purpose is the exact reverse.

Mr. Lloyd George assures me that bearing in mind the warning and rebuke of the former occasion, he endeavoured to be moderate on Saturday, and I think he did not at least greatly err, especially when the altered and exasperating conditions are considered.

I pointed out to him that His Majesty was chiefly annoyed by his introduction of the King's name, which it was of course entirely improper to bring in, as making His Majesty in some sense a participator in a political controversy. I presume that the passage referred to was that in which he said that he was not ready to be governed by the King and the Peers but would bow to 'the King and the people.' He explains to me that he would have considered it would be disrespectful to speak of 'the Peers' and 'the people' alone, omitting the reference to the supreme Head of the State; and he therefore used the phrase reported out of respect without the slightest idea of implying any connivance or co-operation; and that it was so understood.

Mr. Lloyd George begged me to lay before the King the

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906. expression of his profound regret if he had inadvertently offended, and I would humbly express the hope that His Majesty will, in view of the great tension of opinion and feeling which this keen controversy has evoked, look with indulgence on any indiscretion that may have been committed.

I only wish that we could have looked forward to such a settlement of the matter as would have allayed the angry and bitter feelings now aroused, but, as I have said, after the proceedings of last night, I have little hope.

The King was only partly appeased :—

Lord Knollys to Campbell-Bannerman

SANDRINGHAM, *Dec.* 5, '06.—I have submitted your letter of yesterday to the King and he desires me to thank you for it, and also for having spoken to Mr. Lloyd George respecting the words which he used in his speech at Oxford. The King would be glad if you would express his acknowledgments to that gentleman for the message which he has sent to His Majesty through you.

The King is afraid that angry and bitter feelings have been aroused among the Liberals in the House of Commons by the 'Lords'' amendments on the Education Bill, which induced some members to make use of strong expressions about the House of Lords, but what he has found fault with in Mr. Lloyd George's case is that some of his speeches were delivered even before the Bill was introduced into that House, others while it was being discussed, and that the speech at Oxford was made previous to the third reading, when it is possible, though the King is afraid not probable, some of the amendments may be withdrawn or modified by the Opposition. The King says Mr. Lloyd George appears to forget that as a Cabinet Minister he cannot with propriety indulge in that freedom of speech in which, if he were a private member, he would be free to indulge, and this is His Majesty's point.

When the Bill has been actually passed and sent to the House of Commons, the King would not expect Ministers to refrain from criticising the House of Lords, but he does expect them to abstain from advocating, directly or indirectly, their abolition, which, coming from *his Ministers*, would place him in a false position, and which also would be, if not actually unconstitutional, improper language to use when spoken by the responsible advisers of the Crown.

His Majesty much regrets to read what you write as to there being now a small chance of a compromise after Lord Lansdowne's last amendment, but he cannot affect to be surprised at its having had the effect you mention.

Subsequent events have, it is to be feared, put some strain on a rule preventing Ministers of the Crown from attacking the House of Lords, or even advocating its abolition, but in King Edward's view the monarchy and the House of Lords seems to be equally bound up with the hereditary principle, and a threat to the hereditary Chamber inevitably touched the throne.

The session ended on December 21, with all parties in a state of unrest. Liberals reflected bitterly that the chief part of the session had been spent in passing Bills for the House of Lords to destroy; Conservatives and Unionists were far from happy about their own temerity or what lay in store for them. Tariff Reformers openly complained that, since Mr. Chamberlain's illness had withdrawn him from the scene, their cause had been neglected and was now being smothered in old-fashioned controversies which discredited the Tory Party. The *Morning Post* asked whether in killing the Education Bill Mr. Balfour had not 'again sacrificed the interests of the party and the country to "tactical manœuvres."' Others hinted that if Mr. Chamberlain had been on the scene the result would have been different, perhaps forgetting that he himself had speculated openly on a speedy destruction of the new Parliament by the House of Lords. The Government had some compensations. The great South African settlement had been achieved, a large crop of useful minor measures had been gathered in, and active progressive administration was going forward in all the Departments. An anxious foreign situation [1] had been successfully handled, and there was no evidence of any set-back of opinion in the country.

[1] 'Let me congratulate you on the happy ending of (1) Sinai Frontier, (2) Crete, exchange of rulers. Even Persia stands well with your last dispatch which puts Isvolsky on his honour by our joining in the first advance.'—Campbell-Bannerman to Sir Edward Grey, Oct. 4, 1906.

CHAP. XXXIII. 1906.

It was also generally acknowledged, and by opponents as well as friends, that the Prime Minister had established a firm hold upon Parliament and the country, and developed qualities both of intellect and character in his handling of great affairs for which even his friends were hardly prepared.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A DIFFICULT SESSION

The Freedom of Glasgow—A Speech on Housing and Sanitation—Old Glasgow Day—Meeting of Parliament—Cabinet Changes—Mr. Haldane's Army Scheme—The C.I.D.—The Question of Disarmament — The *Nation* Article — Some Unexpected Consequences—Answer to Prince Bülow—The Hague Conference—Disappointments and Mortifications—The Colonial Conference—Protectionists on the War-path—A Spirited Protest—Newfoundland Fisheries—An Abortive Education Bill—The Irish Councils Bill—An Unexpected Rejection—Mr. Birrell's Reflections—The Evicted Tenants Bill—A Visit to Cambridge.

CHAP. XXXIV. ÆT. 70.

DURING the last stage of Lady Campbell-Bannerman's illness the Belmont household had been greatly isolated. Old political friends would pay brief visits *en route* to public meetings; Sir James Campbell came over occasionally from Stracathro, and neighbours like Lady Airlie, Sir John and Lady Kinloch, and Mr. David Erskine were never long absent. There were also occasional shoots, but in these Campbell-Bannerman himself took no part, at all events in his later years. He had no anti-sporting prejudices, but he disliked killing things and positively abetted the invasion of his lawns and grounds by the rabbits which abound in the neighbourhood. He was a companionable man, but the companionship he liked best was that of his wife, and when she was too ailing to receive visitors, he very gladly acquiesced.

But after her death he began manfully to gather his neighbours, friends, and relatives about him, and, with his nephew's wife, Mrs. Morton Campbell, as hostess, and her son Hugh and his friends about the house, there were times when the silent place became cheerful and animated. Mr. Hugh

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

Campbell's musical gifts and his powers as a mimic largely contributed to this, and after dinner the party in the billiard-room was sometimes stirred to downright uproariousness at 'snooker pool,' 'C.-B.' himself at the marking-board, leading the revels. The whole of January 1907 was spent at Belmont, and his diary records that Mr. Asquith, Mr. and Lady Marjorie Sinclair, Mr. and Mrs. T. R. Buchanan, Mr. John Burns, and Mr. George Whiteley (the Chief Whip) paid him visits during these weeks. On January 24 he went for one night to Glasgow as the guest of the Lord Provost, and the following day received the Freedom of the City. Nothing in his life pleased him more than this recognition by his native city, the city of which his own father had been Lord Provost, and he struggled with a real and deep emotion when he came to reply to the great company assembled in St. Andrew's Hall. The theme of his speech was Municipal Government, and the lead which Glasgow had given to the country. He claimed for it that it had been 'as a city set upon a hill, inspiring and encouraging others in the career of municipal improvement, so that advanced ideas and practice in municipal government were recommended and accepted elsewhere, for the very reason that they were seen to be followed with so much confidence and success by that staid and thrifty and unemotional race—for so they were supposed to be—to which he and they belonged.' There followed an autobiographical passage :—

When I entered Parliament, and that is the time over which my bird's-eye view of your municipal progress dates, I was a diligent student of Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy. I am not sure that a good deal of it was not absorbed and does not lurk somewhere in my system to-day. In truth, I hope it is so. It was in that year, 1868, that this great thinker and writer defined the theory of putting drainage and paving and other duties, which everybody now considers to be public duties, upon a demand and supply footing. Such a view has become too grotesque to be any longer mischievous, and we shall be safe in concluding that whatever changes are before us, to lapse into

sanitary or insanitary anarchy is not among them. Our experience has shown also that motives other than those of personal gain or reward may be very powerful, even in parochial and local affairs, and that local patriotism and desire to do one's part for one's neighbour, delight in the exercise of administrative power, which is one of the characteristics of our race—these may be relied upon for the effective discharge of those varied duties required by a municipality.

His speech was by no means all compliments. He contrived to remind his audience that, though there had been a great improvement in the general death-rate, infantile mortality[1] had for nearly twenty years been practically stationary—'a lamentable admission to have to make.' From this he passed to the question of overcrowding :—

Little by little we have come to face the fact that the concentration of human beings in dense masses is a state of things which is contrary to nature, and that, unless powerful counter-attractive agencies are introduced, the issue is bound to be the suffering and gradual destruction of the mass of the population. And why? We are on the hard ground of physical fact. The answer is that when the powers of the air and the soil are not equal to the task that is put upon them, the air and the soil will avenge themselves. Here and elsewhere to-day you have the spectacle of countless thousands of our fellow-men, and a still larger number of children, who are starved of air and space and sunshine, and therefore of the very elements which make a happy life possible. This is a view of city life which is gradually coming home to the heart and understanding and conscience of our people. This view of it is so terrible that it cannot be put away. What is all our wealth and learning and the finest flower of our civilisation and our constitution—what are those and our political theories but dust and ashes if the men and women on whose labour the whole social fabric is maintained are doomed to live and die in darkness and misery in the areas of our great cities. We may undertake expeditions on behalf of oppressed tribes and races, we may conduct foreign missions, we may sympathise with the cause of unfortunate nationality, but it is our own people who have the first claim on us.

[1] He had spoken forcibly on this subject to a deputation which waited on him and Mr. John Burns on Nov. 23, 1906.

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

Possibly in this speech he was indirectly answering Mr. Keir Hardie, who a few days earlier had assailed the Liberal Party in unmeasured terms for its supposed detachment from the real needs of the people and its pursuit of the Roman Imperialism which 'held down India by the sword, oppressed native races, and exalted landlordism' (Darvel, Jan. 12). At the lunch which followed the ceremony in St. Andrew's Hall, he was in his best Scottish humour and delighted his hearers with reminiscences of old Glasgow days.

The whole household moved back to London on the last day of the month, and the Cabinet met on February 2 for a preliminary survey of the coming session. With three days to spare before the next Cabinet, he yielded to his old longing for a whiff of sea-air and slipped away, not this time to his familiar haunt at Dover, but to a hotel at Eastbourne. On the way back he caught a severe cold which hung over him for three weeks, and made sad havoc of his engagements for February. But he managed to present himself at Cabinets and struggled up to attend the opening of Parliament on February 12, when he found himself at once engaged in a duel with Mr. Balfour, who mocked at the Liberal policy of 'filling the cup' of the House of Lords, renewed his attack on the Irish question, and declared the New Hebrides Convention which the Government had just concluded with France to be a flagrant exposure of their hypocrisy about Chinese Labour, since it contained the very compulsory Repatriation Clause which the Radicals had denounced when applied to the Rand. On all these counts he answered vigorously, comparing the House of Lords to a 'watch-dog which was sometimes somnolent and sometimes ferociously active,' and declaring that the question must be 'settled and would probably be settled much more easily than Mr. Balfour imagined.' About Ireland he was supposed at the time to have made a very damaging admission, for he repeated with characteristic candour that, though it might not be practicable to give everything at once, he was in favour of the 'larger policy,'

which was that 'the Irish people should have everything that a self-governing colony had.' On the New Hebrides question he was content with a brief denial, but Mr. Churchill subsequently explained that the compulsion in the Repatriation Clause was upon the employer and not upon the labourer, and was in fact inserted to prevent an employer from detaining a labourer who wished to return. This Convention afforded the lawyers and casuists of the two parties abundant opportunities during the session, the one maintaining its substantial identity with, and the other its absolute difference from, the Chinese Ordinance; and the subject was only disposed of when the new Transvaal Government under General Botha decided to make an end of the Chinese experiment.

In the meantime, the appointment of Mr. Bryce as British Ambassador to Washington had caused the first shuffle in the Cabinet. Campbell-Bannerman had little hesitation about the consequent appointments. He was quite sure that Mr. Birrell was the right man for Ireland. He had shown remarkable parliamentary skill in steering the Education Bill through the House of Commons, and if that measure had been wrecked, it was no fault of his. His geniality and resourcefulness would make him eminently acceptable to Irishmen, and no one was likely to make a better job of the Irish Bill now on the stocks. Of the younger men outside the Cabinet, Mr. Churchill was wanted where he was, and Mr. Harcourt wished to stay where he was—at the Office of Works. But Mr. McKenna had made himself a reputation as Secretary to the Treasury which clearly marked him out for Cabinet rank, and at that moment his gifts seemed specially suited to the Education Department, where just and careful administration seemed the only way of repairing the mischief done by the destruction of the Bill of 1906. Mr. McKenna, therefore, became President of the Board of Education, and Mr. Walter Runciman succeeded him at the Treasury. At the same time the Under-Secretaryship for India, which had become vacant through the resignation of Mr. J. E. Ellis, was filled

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. by the appointment of Mr. Charles Hobhouse; and Dr. Macnamara was brought into the Government to fill Mr. Runciman's place as Secretary to the Local Government Board. Mr. Morley's forebodings that he was not long for the India Office were the only shadow on this scene, and they caused the Prime Minister a good deal of sympathetic anxiety during this year, but fortunately they remained unfulfilled for the next three years.

II

The King's Speech at the opening of Parliament had promised a 'solution' of the 'serious questions affecting the working of our parliamentary institutions' which had arisen from the 'unfortunate differences between the two Houses,' and it had also recited a long list of measures as in contemplation for the coming session. Licensing and Army Reform held the first place in this catalogue, which included Scottish Land Reform, 'measures for further associating the people of Ireland with the management of their domestic affairs,' and for University Reform in that country; a Reduction of Hours Bill for Miners, and Valuation, Small Holdings, and Housing Bills for England and Scotland. The list was easily reeled off, but Ministers and their Departments were exhausted by the labours of the previous session, and several of these measures were scarcely even in draft when Parliament reassembled after its seven weeks' holiday. In spite of the remonstrances of Temperance Reformers, Licensing soon faded out of the programme for this year. Not only were the details intricate and difficult, but common prudence forbade throwing another challenge to the Lords in the second year of the Parliament unless the Government were prepared to stake their lives on the result; and even strong Temperance men were obliged to admit that the public-house was unfavourable ground for a decisive struggle. But if other Ministers wanted time, Mr. Haldane, the Secretary for War, was ready and anxious to fill the gap, and on February 25 he began the exposition of the great scheme for providing the

country with an Expeditionary Force and a Territorial Army which bore its fruits on the battle-fields of France in the autumn of 1914.

Mr. Haldane had undertaken to get the greater part of three millions off the Army Estimates, to provide the country with a vastly more efficient army, and at the same time to leave untouched the Cardwellian principle which, for the Prime Minister at all events, was the Ark of the military covenant. The first part of this enterprise was what chiefly interested some of Mr. Haldane's colleagues, who saw a vision of ruin for the Government if it could not redeem its pledge to bring down the military and naval expenditure of recent years; but everything that touched the War Office interested Campbell-Bannerman, and though he was at first benevolently sceptical about the wizardry which promised these apparently incompatible achievements, as time went on he gained a deep and real respect for the colossal industry of his colleague and his tact and deftness in handling the Generals. Mr. Haldane's scheme is too well known to need detailed description here. Its capital object was to take the then confused mass of troops—regular army, militia, and volunteers—and to organise them into two lines, one the professional Expeditionary Force of 160,000 men, instantly ready for mobilisation, the other a second line army composed of militia and volunteers organised in divisions with the proper complement of infantry, cavalry, and artillery, equipped with transport and medical service; this army to be raised territorially and in all non-military matters controlled by County Associations. This and the Special Reserve (with a new form of recruiting) to reinforce the first line army in certain circumstances required highly complicated legislation which presented a broad target to all kinds of opposition. Night after night during this session Mr. Haldane waged a voluminous warfare with the ex-Ministers, Mr. Brodrick, Mr. Arnold Forster, Mr. Wyndham—who denounced his reductions and expressed unbounded scepticism about his reforms; with Mr. Balfour, who brought all his

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

dialectical gifts to bear on the scheme to discover dilemmas and inconsistencies; and with the little band of military experts and pundits who either had rival schemes or an inexhaustible fund of technical detail for the information of the House. Pessimists predicted that the country would never rise to it or the War Office be capable of it; militarists objected that it would block the road to conscription, and Labour members that it would surely lead to conscription. Ministers mostly retired to their Departments while this campaign proceeded, but the Prime Minister kept his interest unflagging and, though always an acute critic on details, heartily favoured the main lines of the new policy. That 'Schopenhauer would cut this figure in the Barrack-Yard' had, as he frankly said, never occurred to him, but the marvel of marvels was that he 'had his Generals with him.' Campbell-Bannerman knew his Generals, and at this time, as always, had his own wires with the War Office.

Judged by after events, the Army Bill must be counted the principal achievement of the session of 1907. To measure its importance it is only necessary to reflect what the situation of this country would have been, if in August 1914 its military condition had been what it was on the outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899. But it was not only in the House that these questions were debated. All through these months the Committee of Imperial Defence was laboriously engaged in working out the problems of the various kinds of war by sea and land which might threaten the Empire. Campbell-Bannerman took his duties as ex-officio Chairman of this Committee with great seriousness, and through them he was fully apprised, as were all his colleagues who sat on this Committee, of the military conversations with the French and the hypothetical plans which arose out of them. Some Radicals hinted that Liberal Ministers might be better employed than in devoting this inordinate amount of attention to the fighting services, but this was not at all the Prime Minister's opinion.

He was not in the ordinary sense of the terms either Pacifist or anti-militarist. He hated war and was totally opposed to the schemes for compulsory military service which were then beginning to be bruited, and considered them unsound on military as well as political grounds. He would not listen even to the proposals for compulsory drill and rifle-shooting in schools which were strongly pressed upon him from high quarters, and not least by King Edward. But, as has been shown in previous chapters, he believed strongly in the professional Army and wished it brought to the highest state of efficiency, provided always that its expenditure did not encroach upon the necessary demands for the Navy, which he regarded as the front line of defence for this country. He had also a great respect for the profession of arms, and an unfailing interest, maintained since his War Office days, in all questions of military administration. So long as the possibility of war was a necessary hypothesis, to be prepared to wage it efficiently and for that end to study all the conditions in which it might and probably would take place seemed to him a part of the elementary duties of any Government; and he had no patience at all with the complaints that these activities were inconsistent with Liberalism or unworthy of a Liberal Government.

III

But while he was benevolent to Mr. Haldane's scheme and fully realised the possible uses of his Expeditionary Force, he was deeply impressed with the danger of the European competition in armaments, and greatly concerned that at the Hague Conference—fixed for the summer of this year—his Government should take a bold initiative for their reduction. With that object in view he wrote for the first number of the *Nation*, March 2, 1907—a weekly Liberal journal in succession to the *Speaker*, about to be produced under the editorship of Mr. H. J. Massingham—a discursive article under the title of 'The Hague Conference and the Limitation of Armaments,' reviewing the whole

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. situation in Europe, and intimating that Great Britain was prepared to take the lead in staying the competition in naval armaments. This article, which was submitted to Sir Edward Grey and most carefully discussed between him and the Prime Minister before it was issued, must be given in full :—

THE HAGUE CONFERENCE AND THE LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS

By the PRIME MINISTER

The disposition shown by certain Powers, of whom Great Britain is one, to raise the question of the limitation of armaments at the approaching Hague Conference, has evoked some objections both at home and abroad, on the ground that such action would be ill-timed, inconvenient, and mischievous. I wish to indicate, as briefly as may be, my reasons for holding these objections to be baseless.

It should be borne in mind that the original Conference at the Hague was convened for the purpose of raising this very question, and in the hope that the Powers might arrive at an understanding calculated to afford some measure of relief from an excessive and ever-increasing burden. The hope was not fulfilled, nor was it to be expected that agreement on so delicate and complex a matter would be reached at the first attempt ; but, on the other hand, I have never heard it suggested that the discussion left behind it any injurious consequences. I submit that it is the business of those who are opposed to the renewal of the attempt to show that some special and essential change of circumstances has arisen such as to render unnecessary, inopportune, or positively mischievous a course adopted with general approbation in 1898.

Nothing of the kind has, so far as I know, been attempted, and I doubt if it could be undertaken with any hope of success. It was desirable in 1898 to lighten the burden of armaments ; but that consummation is not less desirable to-day, when the weight of the burden has been enormously increased. In 1898 it was already perceived that the endless multiplication of the engines of war was futile and self-defeating ; and the years that have passed have only served to strengthen and intensify that impression. In regard to the struggle for sea power, it was suspected that no limits could be set to the competition save

by a process of economic exhaustion, since the natural checks imposed on military power by frontiers, and considerations of population, have no counterpart upon the seas; and again, we find that the suspicion has grown to something like a certainty to-day.

On the other hand, I am aware of no special circumstances which would make the submission of this question to the Conference a matter of international misgiving. It would surprise me to hear it alleged that the interests of the Powers in any respect impose on them a divergence of standpoint so absolute and irreconcilable that the mere discussion of the limitation of armaments would be fraught with danger. Here, again, it seems to me that we do well to fortify ourselves from recent experience. Since the first Hague Conference was held, the points of disagreement between the Powers have become not more, but less acute; they are confined to a far smaller field; the sentiment in favour of peace, so far as can be judged, has become incomparably stronger and more constant; and the idea of arbitration and the peaceful adjustment of international disputes has attained a practical potency and a moral authority undreamt of in 1898. These are considerations as to which the least that can be said is that they should be allowed their due weight; and in face of them, I suggest that only upon one hypothesis can the submission of this grave matter to the Conference be set down as inadmissible: namely, that guarantees of peace, be they what they may, are to be treated as having no practical bearing on the scale and intensity of warlike preparations.

That would be a lame and impotent conclusion, calculated to undermine the moral position of the Conference, and to stultify its proceedings in the eye of the world. It would amount to a declaration that the common interest of peace, proclaimed for the first time by the community of nations assembled at The Hague, and carried forward since then by successive stages, with a rapidity beyond the dreams of the most sanguine, has been confided to the guardianship of the Admiralties and War Offices of the Powers.

Let me in conclusion say a word as to the part of Great Britain. We have already given earnest of our sincerity by the considerable reductions that have been effected in our naval and military expenditure, as well as by the undertaking that we are prepared to go further if we find a similar disposition in other quarters. Our delegates, therefore, will not go into the Conference empty-

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. handed. It has, however, been suggested that our example will count for nothing, because our preponderant naval position will still remain unimpaired. I do not believe it. The sea power of this country implies no challenge to any single State or group of States. I am persuaded that throughout the world that power is recognised as non-aggressive, and innocent of designs against the independence, the commercial freedom, and the legitimate development of other States, and that it is, therefore, a mistake to imagine that the naval Powers will be disposed to regard our position on the sea as a bar to any proposal for the arrest of armaments, or to the calling of a temporary truce. The truth appears to me to lie in the opposite direction. Our known adhesion to those two dominant principles—the independence of nationalities and the freedom of trade—entitles us of itself to claim that, if our fleets be invulnerable, they carry with them no menace across the waters of the world, but a message of the most cordial goodwill, based on a belief in the community of interests between the nations.

HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

The writer flattered himself that words could not have been more carefully chosen to avoid offence or misunderstanding, but the result was extremely discouraging, especially in Germany, to whom it was specially addressed. To the German mind an intimation from the supreme Naval Power that it desired the naval competition to cease at the moment of its own greatest preponderance—the moment when it had invented a new type of battleship which it claimed to be vastly superior to any possessed by its rivals—seemed the reverse of conciliatory. The German General Staff could not imagine such a proposal being made unless the Government making it was prepared to enforce it; and it was seriously argued in Berlin that this *démarche*, coinciding as it did with a great scheme for reforming the British Army and providing it with an Expeditionary Force, was a concerted plan, arising out of the *Entente*, to put pressure on Germany. During the fortnight which followed the publication of this article, there was great excitement in Germany. English journalists received agitated telegrams from German editors, begging

them to write articles[1] explaining that the Prime Minister's intentions were pacific, and that he was innocent of the conspiracy imputed to him. The alarm was allayed by the efforts of peacemakers on both sides, but from then onwards to the outbreak of the Great War the same suspicions were fatal to all public efforts by the supreme Naval Power to propose a reduction in competitive shipbuilding, and they were possibly in the mind of the American Secretary of State, Mr. Hughes, when he wisely decided at Washington in 1921 that the initiative must come from America alone and be confided to no other Government before it was announced. In 1907 Campbell-Bannerman found to his disappointment that he had closed the door upon himself, and on April 30 Prince Bülow announced in the Reichstag that Germany would decline to discuss the question of disarmament at the Hague Conference. At the same time it was conveyed to the British Government that if anything was to be done in this direction, it must be by private accommodation through the ordinary diplomatic channels.

Campbell-Bannerman was greatly disappointed, but he wisely put the best face on it, and in a speech at Manchester on May 10 made the most civil reply that the circumstances permitted to the German Chancellor :—

A speech has lately been made by the German Chancellor as to which I must say a word on a matter in which many of us in this country are deeply interested, and which His Majesty's Government from the moment of taking office deemed it their duty to take up—I mean the submission to the Hague Conference of the question of the reduction of armaments. We have not been without hope, although the hope may have been faint at times, that all the Great Powers, including Germany, might see their way to join in such a discussion ; and, now that we know that the discussion must be conducted without Germany participating, I will not pretend that we are not greatly disappointed. It might have been, and indeed probably would have been, impossible to have at once found a formula which would have

[1] One such article I wrote under the title of 'Das Perfide Albion' for the Munich periodical *Marz* (May 15, 1907).

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. secured general acceptance; but we hoped that a beginning might have been made with this question, that a measure of mutual confidence might have been established which would have borne fruit later on and enabled us, in concert with other nations, gradually to reduce the excessive and intolerable burden of armaments which is the scourge of Europe. I do not despair of something yet being done, though it will be far more difficult to accomplish without the general concurrence of all the Great Powers in the preliminary proposition that such a reduction is a thing to be desired and sought for. Now I know that we have been suspected of a wish, a sinister wish, to embarrass Germany by raising this question. It is an absolutely unfounded suspicion. Had Germany approached us with the initiative we should have met her freely and without any *arrière-pensée*. Our policy has been dictated simply and solely by considerations which we have never endeavoured to conceal. We believe the growth of armaments a curse, and, believing it so regarded by the Governments and the people of other States, and with the evidence before our eyes of the advances made in the direction of peace by arbitration-treaties and elimination of many old-standing causes of suspicion, we thought it our duty to seize the opportunity which the Hague Conference offered for seeing whether a step might not be taken in the direction of reducing armaments. I think we were in the right. We were attempting no more than other Governments in less favourable circumstances have attempted. Remember that the Hague Conference itself was first convoked to deal with this very question. We sought to carry out, we still seek to carry out, the policy advocated after the Crimean War by Mr. Disraeli when he said, 'Let us terminate this disastrous system of rival expenditure, and mutually agree, without any hypocrisy, but in a manner and under circumstances which can admit of no doubt, to show by a reduction of armaments that peace is really our policy.' Prince Bülow and the German Government appear to believe that such a method is delusive, and so they recognise that they can have no share in it. I recognise the candour with which Prince Bülow has said they must stand away from it altogether, and, though the Government deeply regret it, they appreciate the candour with which it has been stated and the friendly tone of the Chancellor's speech.

With reduction of armaments ruled out or relegated, as it was, to an academic discussion at the tail end of the programme, it was impossible for the Cabinet to discover

any effective part for Great Britain at the Hague Conference. The Admiralty were unanimous that the immunity of private property at sea which was proposed by America and supported by Germany, Austria, and Italy could not be conceded, and there was nothing else of importance on the agenda. When it took place in July of this year, the Conference became in large part a contention between Great Britain upholding what she deemed to be the essential prerogatives of sea power and the Land Powers desiring to reduce them. By supporting the American proposal for exempting private property at sea and taking her allies with her, Germany adroitly manœuvred us into a position in which we seemed all but single-handed to be holding out for the largest belligerent rights against the humane opinion which would limit them. Lord Reay, who had been appointed one of the British delegates at this Conference, wrote a long *cri de cœur* to the Prime Minister from The Hague at the end of July, describing the sad plight to which the representatives of a British Liberal Government had been reduced by the obduracy of the experts, who even argued publicly that a hundred-ton marine collier must be treated as an auxiliary man-of-war. The *beau rôle* had certainly, as Lord Reay complained, passed to Germany and America. Campbell-Bannerman sent this letter on to the Foreign Office, but there was nothing to be done. The British Government threw its weight on the side of compulsory arbitration, which was stifled by multitudinous objections; proposed an International Prize Court; offered to abolish contraband, which pleased no one; obtained some limitations on floating mines, live torpedoes, the bombardment of undefended places, and the dropping of explosives from balloons, all of which proved inoperative in the Great War. Finally it secured a day for a discussion on the limitation of armaments, when a pious resolution declaring it to be 'highly desirable' was unanimously passed in the absence of the German delegates. A final resolution decided that another Conference should be held within nine years, a period which expired just when the Battle of the

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. Somme was beginning, but what Germany forbade at The Hague in 1907 was happily accomplished at Washington in 1922. History may yet record that Germany made the greatest of her mistakes when she declined the British Prime Minister's initiative in this year, and persisted in her attempt to challenge British power at sea.

IV

The Colonial Conference was due for this year and brought a great gathering of Dominion statesmen to London, among whom General Botha, appearing for the first time as one of the Prime Ministers of the Empire, especially caught the public imagination and brought home to it the greatness of the Liberal achievement in South Africa. The occasion was by no means without embarrassment for the Government. With the exception of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and General Botha, both of whom held strictly to the position that each Government must be master of its own fiscal system, the Dominion Premiers pressed strongly for the adoption of a Preferential system by the Imperial Government. Against that the door had, as Mr. Churchill said in a picturesque phrase, been 'banged, bolted, and barred' by the election of 1906; and it was known to all the Dominion Premiers what the answer of the Imperial Government must be. But their presence in London as advocates of the Chamberlain policy was too good an opportunity for the Tariff propagandists to miss, and parallel with the Conference they organised a series of dinners and public meetings at which the Premiers were entertained and assured of unflagging support in their efforts to break down the obduracy of the Cobdenite British Government. Mr. Balfour entered with zest into these proceedings, and at the annual demonstration at the Albert Hall on May 3 declared himself finally converted to Preference through the clear proof given by the Premiers that the Colonies desired it.

Campbell-Bannerman made the speech of welcome at the first day of the Conference (April 15), and, after laying

stress on the many points of agreement between the Dominions and the Imperial Government, intimated firmly but politely that the latter 'could not go behind the declared opinions of the country and of Parliament.' The burning subject was reached at the end of the month and debated with much animation for several days, Mr. Asquith and Mr. Churchill maintaining the Government position against Mr. Deakin, Dr. Smartt, Dr. Jameson, and Sir William Lyne, who vigorously assailed it. Campbell-Bannerman was anxious to keep this controversy within the walls of the conference chamber, and to avoid entangling the Premiers in a burning issue of British domestic politics, but when certain of them expounded their own views on public platforms, and the Opposition in Parliament took up the cry that they were being cold-shouldered and their demands 'brutally refused,' he was ready for battle, and on May 10 he made a vigorous reply in the same speech at Manchester in which he answered Prince Bülow:—

The occurrence of the Imperial Conference has been seized upon as an opportunity for a party demonstration, for a move on the chess-board of the Unionist leadership, and for sowing, if possible, dissension between His Majesty's present Government and the Colonies. In this latter object they have failed, as they deserved to fail. In Parliament and the press day by day an effort has been made by the self-styled Imperialists, forsooth! to impute to half their countrymen—observe my moderation—lukewarmness in the friendly feeling towards our brethren beyond the seas. Conduct more worthy of censure on all grounds, conduct less really imperialistic, could not well be conceived. The attitude of the Government has been from the first perfectly straight and honest, perfectly sympathetic, perfectly true to the real principle of the British Empire. We have had a plain duty to perform, and we have performed it. . . . I can understand the temptation, gentlemen, to a party in the position of the present Opposition to catch at any means of rehabilitating itself, but is it seemly, is it wise, is it patriotic, to seize this moment for exploiting our friends beyond the seas for such a purpose, to represent us as banging the door in their face, when we tell them the patent fact, the undisputed truth, that the country is firmly attached to its fiscal system, and to hold up to obloquy us who are adherents of

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. the party which gave self-government to every one of these Colonies? They hold us up to obloquy as indifferent to the cause of the Empire when all we do is to claim for ourselves the same freedom which these self-governing Colonies and communities enjoy, and which nothing on earth can tempt them to forgo.

This remonstrance had little effect, and the controversy continued merrily until the visitors returned to their respective countries.

Another Colonial question which caused a good deal of minor friction this year was that of the Newfoundland fisheries, on which the United States alleged certain grievances under the Treaty of 1818. Trouble between the fishermen of the two countries and their respective Governments had been averted by a *modus vivendi* pending a definite settlement, and it was now proposed, with the concurrence of the Colony, to submit the questions in dispute to the Hague Tribunal. But at this point the Colonial Government stubbornly refused to prolong the *modus vivendi* until the tribunal could meet, thus placing the Imperial Government in an awkward fix between the Colony and the United States. Much heat was generated and some party capital made out of the incident, since the Newfoundland Premier appeared to allege—with little ground as subsequently appeared—that he had been treated with a lack of courtesy by the Imperial Government. That Government found itself obliged to override the Newfoundland Government and prolong the *modus vivendi* by Order in Council, and in the end it was admitted by all parties that this was a necessary step. 'It is to be hoped,' remarked Campbell-Bannerman in reporting the conclusion of the matter to the King (Aug. 15), 'that the movements of the herring, which are not under official or even human control, will not precipitate the fishing season before the Order expires.'

V

With the Colonial Conference sitting and numerous

ceremonial engagements consequent upon it, with the incessant work of the Prime Minister's office on his shoulders, with deputations to receive and public speeches to make, Campbell-Bannerman found his strength severely taxed during these months. He managed to get away for ten days at Easter to visit Lord Rendel at his beautiful villa at Cannes, but, much as he enjoyed this interlude, the long and rapid journeys and the sight-seeing and sociability that were packed into the short time were scarcely reposeful. He returned to take personal charge of the new Procedure Rules for the House of Commons, and carried them through with great smoothness and rapidity. Up to this time he had prided himself on being a Conservative on all House of Commons questions. He held strongly that when a man had once been elected to Parliament he should be first and last a House of Commons man, and that nothing should be done to increase the temptation to combine other pursuits with membership of the House. This opinion he expressed somewhat defiantly in the debate on Mr. Balfour's new rules in 1904:—

> I am an anti-two-o'clocker, an anti-dinner-hourer, and an anti-week-ender, and I believe all these alterations have had a most pernicious effect on the business and on the tone of the House. I think the dinner-hour breaks up a long discussion, for instance in Committee on a particular Bill, and makes it easier to obstruct. Then the meeting at two o'clock is, I think, by universal consent most inconvenient, not only to men of business, but also to the ordinary mortal. . . . As to the week-end, it does the same thing, but on a much larger scale. It interrupts the life we lead here, though it may be of enormous convenience to the men engaged on business; but we must not consider the convenience or happiness of individual members. . . . The first business of every member of the House ought to be parliamentary, and, whatever we may do to ease the burden, we ought not to do anything to break down that feeling.[1]

His own practice was not, perhaps, quite so austere as these words might suggest. His ideal Parliament would have been one which met in January, rose at the end of July

[1] House of Commons, May 19, 1904.

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907. and left its members free to spend the autumn in Marienbad and the winter in Scotland, and which for these beneficent ends was willing to work six days in the week for six months in the year. But in the circumstances of 1907 some means had to be devised of expediting business if the actual Parliament was not to be kept in continuous sitting for ten months out of the twelve; and he now proposed to increase the Standing Committees to four (including one for Scottish business, consisting of the seventy-two Scottish members with fifteen others added); and (money Bills always excepted) to extend the scope of these Committees to all but the most important and controversial measures. The Chairmen of these Standing Committees were now for the first time armed with the power of applying the closure and preventing irrelevance, repetition, and dilatory motions. This is the method by which the House of Commons now works, and by clearing 'Committee of the whole House' for the principal Bills of the session and 'sending the others upstairs,' it has undoubtedly, for good or evil, increased the legislative output, and enabled a great many measures to be passed which would have had little or no chance under the previous system.

VI

This was plain sailing, but from this point difficulties began to accumulate. The first bloom of the great triumph had passed, and the sessional work was highly contentious. Nonconformists were persistent that something should be done, in spite of the House of Lords, to remove their grievances, but the difficulty was to know what. Vindictive administration against Church schools did not commend itself to the wiser spirits and would not touch the main issues. Efficiency could rightly be exacted but persecution would be odious. After much cogitation the Cabinet decided on the one-clause Bill, which Mr. McKenna introduced under the ten-minutes' rule on February 26, relieving local authorities of the cost of special religious instruction—reckoned as one-fifteenth of the teacher's

salary in non-provided schools. This would have removed the special grievance of the passive resister, and made the law what the Court of Appeal had declared it to be in the West Riding case. Logical and just as it might be, there was no enthusiasm for this expedient. Nonconformists feared that it might be taken as a settlement of their claims, which went much further; Churchmen hinted at a new kind of passive resistance against Cowper-Temple teaching, which was still to be maintained out of rates. Teachers doubted whether the denominations would make up the fifteenth part of the salary, which it was proposed to dock, or leave the teacher to bear the loss. After a few weeks the Cabinet decided to drop this Bill, and the Prime Minister confessed to a certain weariness of the interminable subject. 'Every solution suggested,' he tells the King, 'is open to objection, and the Cabinet is engaged in trying to discover the least objectionable.'

More serious for the Government was the definite failure of the step-by-step policy in Ireland. Campbell-Bannerman had consented to it very reluctantly and, as he always openly admitted, for purely tactical reasons. He was a Home Ruler *sans phrase*, and at the beginning of the session had said definitely and somewhat defiantly that 'the Irish people should have what every self-governing Colony in the whole of the Empire has—the power of managing its own affairs,' [1] though for the sake of the weaker brethren he was ready to proceed by instalments. Two conditions, however, he laid down for his own action, one that the instalment offered should lead up to and be compatible with the 'full policy'; the other that it should be offered as an instalment which was avowedly not a satisfaction of the full demand. On these terms he was content that the Irish Devolution Bill should go forward, but he was careful to describe it as a 'little, modest, shy, humble effort to give administrative powers to the Irish people.' [2] The Bill, which was introduced by Mr. Birrell on May 7, proposed

[1] House of Commons, Feb. 12, 1907.
[2] Manchester, May 10, 1907.

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

to set up a central Representative Irish Council, consisting of 82 elected and 24 nominated members, and to transfer to it the control hitherto exercised by Dublin Castle of eight principal Departments (Local Government Board, Agriculture and Technical Instruction, Congested Districts Board, National Education, Intermediate Education, Reformatory and Industrial Schools, and the Registrar-General's Office). The necessary funds were at the same time to be transferred to the new authority, and a bonus of £650,000 added from the Imperial exchequer. Mr. Birrell, who also was an impenitent believer in the major policy, expressed the hope that it would pave the way to Home Rule; and Mr. Redmond, though cautious and critical, led the House of Commons to suppose that it would probably be accepted by Irish Nationalists as a step forward. That also had been the opinion both of the Chief Secretary and of the Viceroy, Lord Aberdeen. The Unionists were implacable even to this mild proposal, and Mr. Balfour tore it to pieces as at once too much and too little, dangerous to the Union and a mere sop to the Home Ruler. It was, in fact, not a little exposed to the very objections which Campbell-Bannerman himself had urged against Mr. Chamberlain's Irish Central Board Scheme in 1885.[1]

Mr. Redmond was no doubt absolutely sincere in the mild benediction which he had given to the Bill on its introduction, but he was powerless to affect Irish opinion, which, led by the clergy and the new Sinn Fein movement just then coming into active politics, declared itself unalterably opposed to the acceptance of anything short of Gladstonian Home Rule. At a National Convention held in Dublin in Whitsun week, the Bill was unanimously rejected, Mr. Redmond himself moving the hostile resolution, and declaring that further scrutiny of its provisions had convinced him that it was past mending. Campbell-Bannerman was not surprised nor, if the truth be told, greatly disappointed at this result. The half-way house

[1] See *supra*, vol. i. p. 84.

was from his point of view a concession to the weaker brethren which could at the best have been no more than a quite temporary makeshift. But this immediate and conspicuous failure was a fiasco for the Government and an annoyance to its supporters, who complained that the situation had been seriously misjudged and a weak compromise adopted which injured the Liberal Party without conciliating either the Irish or the Opposition. Any other leader would have found himself in a serious scrape over this business, but Campbell-Bannerman was easily forgiven. The staunch Home Rulers, who were then as always the great majority of the party, held him justified in his tenacity to the larger policy, and the Irish for the same reason continued to regard him as the warmest of their British friends.

The Chief Secretary was taking holiday in France when the news of this decision reached him, and he wrote to the Prime Minister a long and extremely sagacious and prescient letter about the situation created in Ireland. 'Our mistake was,' he said, 'to touch "devolution" at all. If Home Rule was impossible, we should have contented ourselves with land reform and the University question and taken altogether our own line.' From a purely strategical point of view, he told the Prime Minister, the rejection of the Bill was not all loss. For had Redmond accepted it and proceeded to move drastic amendments enlarging its scope, the Government would have been in the serious dilemma of having either to accept these and give great offence to the Moderates, or to reject them in the teeth of a dangerous combination of Irish and Radicals. But the consequences in Ireland were extremely serious, and Mr. Birrell pointed to the combination of clergy and Sinn Fein as a new and ominous fact which was equally threatening to the Government and to the Irish Parliamentary Party. Redmond and Dillon, he said, were now in a position in which the slightest appearance on their part of yielding an iota of the full Irish demand would be instantly fatal to them. The entire Parliamentary Party would be 'kicked out' if the suspicion gained ground that they were conniving

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

at the weakening of British Liberals on Home Rule. The position of Ministers would at the best be an extremely difficult one during this Parliament, and it could only be made tolerable if they persisted in the Irish legislation that remained to them. In any case there must be no recrimination. Redmond and Dillon were not to blame. They misjudged the situation : that was all. Mr. Birrell wound up by saying he felt himself to be 'somewhat of a Jonah, certainly not a mascotte,' and 'if the Government wished to lighten the ship he would be a willing sacrifice.'

This, it need not be said, was the very last thing that the Prime Minister desired. He had a warm affection for Mr. Birrell and the highest opinion of his parliamentary capacity. All that mortal man could do he had done for both the Education Bill and the Irish Councils Bill. About the latter and the situation which followed from its rejection he and his chief were entirely at one, and in the statement that he made to the House on June 2, Campbell-Bannerman announced that an Evicted Tenants Bill would be introduced and passed before the end of the session, and a University Bill laid on the stocks during the autumn recess. The Evicted Tenants Bill, introduced on June 27, empowered the Estates Commissioners to purchase land, by compulsion if need be, for the resettlement of the two thousand evicted tenants, and to declare the land so acquired to be an estate within the meaning of the Purchase Acts. Occupying tenants dispossessed for this purpose were to be compensated or to receive as good land elsewhere. The Bill was hotly resisted by the Opposition and only carried after stormy scenes under guillotine closure. The Lords emasculated it by preventing the compulsory expropriation of *bona fide* owners, and sundry other changes; and though Mr. Birrell yielded, as he said, to *force majeure*, the Irish Party vehemently protested, and in the final stage walked out of the House, declaring that the Lords and the Opposition were bent on making turmoil in Ireland during the coming winter. In the meantime cattle-driving had started, and the Tory Party called loudly for coercion,

while Mr. Birrell, backed by the Prime Minister, stood firmly on the ordinary law. Before the end of the session, the uniform resistance offered by the Opposition to every demand of the Irish Nationalists had largely healed the breach between the Irish and the Government, and enabled the former to maintain working relations with the Liberal Party.

On June 12 he went up to Cambridge to receive an honorary degree from his old University, and at the hands of its Chancellor, the Duke of Devonshire, who made his last public appearance on this occasion. Bracketed with him as recipients of the same honour were Lord Elgin, Mr. Haldane, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, and Lord Milner. The University showed its usual conscientious impartiality in this selection, but the company assembled in the Senate House made it abundantly clear that Lord Milner rather than the Radical Prime Minister was the hero of this hour. The same evening he attended a banquet in the Hall of Trinity College (at which the Duke of Devonshire presided), and made a skilful and amusing after-dinner speech in the absence of reporters. He spoke, among other things, of the tacit assumption which seemed to be made by Trinity men of the 'fifties of the 'unique position' of their own educational establishment. 'When he and his Trinity friends walked about Cambridge they were of course aware that there were other oldish buildings somewhat resembling their own and saw other men walking about clad in garments of a similar description, but as to who they were and what were their occupations and who tenanted these other buildings they were quite indifferent and had no desire to know.' The next morning he breakfasted with the Master of Trinity, Dr. Montagu Butler, and afterwards went for a drive with him. As they drove they talked together of the 107th Psalm, and a day or two later Dr. Butler sent him a privately printed copy of a version he had made of this Psalm in Latin elegiacs. Campbell-Bannerman confessed frankly that he was not always in his element in academic circles, but whoever shared his

CHAP. XXXIV. 1907.

enthusiasm for his favourite Psalms or his favourite passages of Scripture was a kindred spirit. Dr. Butler, in the letter accompanying his gift, speaks of the 'great passage' in St. Luke, which records that out of ten who were healed the Samaritan alone (*ἀλλογενὴς οὗτος*) returned to give thanks, and that also was possibly one of the subjects of their talk. With all his preoccupations, his mind seems to have dwelt much in these days on these deep and simple religious themes.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE HOUSE OF LORDS QUESTION

A gloomy Outlook—English and Scottish Land Bills—The Attitude of the Peers—A Challenge to Scotsmen—The House of Lords Question—Finding a Way—Money Schemes—Choice of the Suspensory Veto—The Prime Minister's Speech—The Debate in the Commons—The Harvest of the Session—The Strain on the Prime Minister.

WHEN Parliament reassembled after Whitsuntide, the sessional programme was in sad disarray. Licensing, which held the first place in the King's Speech, had vanished; the new Education Bill was still-born, and the Irish Bill had hopelessly miscarried. The party was growing restive at the long delay in producing the Government's plan for dealing with the House of Lords, and rumour was busy with dissensions in the Cabinet on that subject. It was now the beginning of June and all parties were agreed that this year there must be no autumn session. It was evident that only tremendous pressure could redeem the session from complete failure. The Government rose to the occasion, and in his statement on June 2 the Prime Minister promised within a week to relieve the anxiety of his followers about its House of Lords policy, and to proceed day by day with the English Small Holdings Bill, a Small Holdings Bill and a Land Valuation Bill for Scotland, in addition to the Irish Evicted Tenants Bill already mentioned. The Criminal Appeal Bill (a highly important legal reform abundantly justified by subsequent experience), a Bill providing for the medical inspection of school children, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, and the Transvaal Loan Bill were afterwards added. Nothing but the freest use of the new Standing Committees and drastic

guillotine closure in the full House enabled this programme to be carried in the ten weeks that now remained.

For the Prime Minister, as for all his colleagues, the labour was endless and exhausting, and his services were frequently in demand to help in steering the narrow course by which alone legislation could in some measure satisfy the Liberal and Radical demand and yet escape complete disaster in the House of Lords. The shadow of the Lords was over every proposal, and the question from the beginning was not what the Lords would like to do but how much they would dare to do. It is impossible to follow the course of these measures in detail, but in the end Mr. Harcourt succeeded in carrying his English Small Holdings and Allotments Bill—a measure empowering county and borough councils to acquire land and lease it to cultivating tenants and investing parish councils with a similar power in respect of allotments—without serious alteration, while the wrath of the Lords was concentrated on Mr. Sinclair's Small Holdings and Land Valuation Bills for Scotland. These were not on the face of them revolutionary measures. The Small Holdings Bill merely extended the crofter system, well justified by practical experience, to the Lowlands, and provided security at a fair rent, to be fixed by a Land Commission, for the small-holder, without expropriating the landlord. But it gave compulsory powers to 'Agricultural Commissioners,' and the idea of a 'fair rent' adjudicated by a Land Court conjured up Irish analogies which filled the landowners with alarm. Mr. Balfour was hot in the attack, and when the Bill reached the Lords he found an unexpected ally in Lord Rosebery. The Peers eventually announced their intention of hanging up the Scottish Bill until the English Bill was disposed of, and then doing to it what in the previous session they had done to the Education Bill, that is, so amending it that its authors would not recognise their own offspring: whereupon the Government decided to withdraw it.[1] The Land

[1] It was in this debate that Lord Lansdowne used a phrase which was long remembered in controversies on the land question. He said that

Values Bill, which proposed to add a column to the Scottish Valuation Rolls, giving the capital value of what land apart from improvements might be expected to fetch in the open market, received even shorter shrift. This the Lords declared to be rank Henry-Georgism obviously designed to prepare the way for the hated principle of site-value taxation, and it was summarily rejected on second reading.

Campbell-Bannerman spoke at length on the third reading (Aug. 16) of the English Small Holdings Bill, and defended the Government for applying different principles to England and to Scotland. As for the Bill itself, he declared it to be at once far-reaching and moderate, a Bill which 'offered no scope or margin for those operations in the House of Lords with which they had become only too familiar.' The line taken by the Lords was, in fact, that they were so enamoured of the proposals of the English Bill that they could not bear to see another principle applied to Scotland.

The Opposition were somewhat alarmed about the effect of this attitude upon the minds of patriotic Scotsmen, and when the subject was raised in the Commons on Aug. 22, they endeavoured to avert the wrath which they saw coming in Scotland by attacking the Government for not proceeding with that part of their scheme which affected the crofters. The Prime Minister, who was now on his native heath, made a vigorous counter-attack :—

It comes to this, that the question is forced upon us : who is to control the legislation with regard to the vital interests of the people of Scotland? Is it those who are authorised by the people of Scotland to speak for them, or is it noble lords in another place and a small section of this House who sympathise with the noble lords? I trust there will be no doubt whatever what answer must be given to this question : and we abandon what would have been a farce, the proposal that further progress should be made with this Bill in those circumstances, and with those avowed intentions on behalf of the commanding majority in the

'what gives reality to ownership and makes it a valuable and precious thing to many people was, above all, the right to select the persons to be associated with the proprietor in the cultivation of the soil.'—(House of Lords, Aug. 14, 1907.)

other House. We abandon the further progress of this Bill with the greatest regret, but the provisions which we thus objected to will be reintroduced at an early date and will be passed through this House in as speedy a manner as possible, and then we shall invite the other House either honestly to reject those provisions or to pass the Bill with reasonable amendments consistent with the main purpose and principle of the Bill. As I have said, it is a question of the future control of Scottish affairs, and on that question we have no doubt what our course is.—(Aug. 22, 1907.)

II

Such in general was the course of the session, a session dominated throughout by the conflict between the two Houses which now, it was plain, could not be avoided. In the light of after events the most important event of this year was the definite setting of the lists for that struggle.

When the Education Bill was wrecked in the last month of the previous year, the Government had pledged themselves to 'find a way.'

Six weeks later a passage in the King's Speech had declared that 'serious questions affecting the working of our parliamentary system had arisen from unfortunate differences between the two Houses,' and that 'His Majesty's Ministers have this important subject under consideration with a view to a solution of the difficulty.' The Prime Minister had repeated this pledge in the speech that he made on the opening day of the session.[1] The representative body was not, he declared, in this country, 'as it was in other countries not very far away, a plaything or a safety valve, or at any rate an outhouse, a succursal of the Constitution,' it was the heart and centre of the whole governing system, and it ceased to be representative 'if the leaders of a party which had been overwhelmingly defeated by the popular voice were to remain, directly or indirectly, in supreme control of the legislation of the country.' 'We do not intend,' he said later, 'to be a Government on sufferance, or to act as caretakers in the House of a party which the

[1] House of Commons, Feb. 12, 1907.

country has rejected.'[1] This theme he repeated again and again in public speeches during the first six months of 1907. The Liberal Party, he boldly declared, 'cannot take blame to themselves for any lack of forbearance, but really when you see those legislators, who are where they are from no fault of their own—it may be, although I do not say it, from some merit of their own—so exercising their powers within six months of that unparalleled general election, we really must not be asked to go on kissing the rod. . . . The time for compromisings and temporisings and verbal expostulations has gone by; and we must give the House of Lords to understand that, whilst we are perfectly ready to legislate with due deliberation and to give every weight to their representations, the British people must be master in their own house.'[2]

These generalities were plain sailing, but their practical application was full of difficulty, and it took many months to explore the ground and procure agreement between exponents of rival schemes. There were obviously two branches of the subject—the composition of the Second Chamber, and the powers of the Second Chamber. The problem might be solved by limiting the powers of the existing Chamber, or it might be solved by changing its character and devising new relations for it with the House of Commons. All parties believed and professed to believe that some reform of the House of Lords was necessary. A purely hereditary chamber containing a nine-tenths majority for one party and absolutely at the disposal of that party, whether in power or in opposition, could manifestly not be defended in serious argument by even the warmest of its supporters. The Peers declared their readiness, even their anxiety, to be 'reformed'; one of their number, Lord Newton, had produced a Bill for this purpose, and another, Lord Cawdor, had sought to anticipate the Government by moving for a Select Committee on the subject. But the Liberal and the Conservative 'reformer' clearly had different motives. The one wished

[1] Manchester, May 9, 1907. [2] Plymouth, June 7, 1907.

to clear the ground of an obstruction to Liberal and Radical legislation; the other to strengthen what he considered to be a necessary resistance to dangerous and ill-advised change. More than ever in these days it seemed imperative to the Conservative to be ready with a second line of defence when, as Lord Salisbury used to say, 'the House of Commons misconducted itself.'

Campbell-Bannerman, from the beginning, was clear in his mind on one point: a Liberal Government would be extremely ill-advised to touch the composition of the Second Chamber until it had settled its powers. To set up a nominated Second Chamber composed of grave and reverend but necessarily conservative-minded individuals would, if such a Chamber succeeded to the powers of the present House, both increase the evil and abolish the remedy which the present system provided in the last resort through the creation of peers. On the other hand, to set up an elective Second Chamber would be to destroy the unique character of the House of Commons, and to introduce a new dissension into the heart of the Constitution. On one of these points at all events the Prime Minister had a warm supporter in King Edward, who held one view definitely about all reform schemes of either of these types —namely, that he did not desire to be left the sole hereditary authority in the United Kingdom.

It was agreed ground, then, that the composition of the Second Chamber should for the present be left alone, and the Cabinet Committee appointed early in the year proceeded on that basis. This Committee presently produced a scheme for joint sittings between a delegation of the House of Lords and the House of Commons sitting in its full numbers. In case of disagreement it was proposed that a hundred peers, among whom all members of the Administration were to be included, should debate and vote with the Commons, and that divisions thus taken in this joint Assembly should be final. To this plan Campbell-Bannerman took strong exception, first on the constitutional ground that a voting Conference between Lords and

Commons would put the power of the Lords on an equality with that of the Commons—an anti-democratic innovation which he thought a Liberal Government should be the last to introduce; and next on the practical ground that it would be fatal to Liberal Governments unless they had a majority of at least 100. Such a scheme might serve well enough to tide over emergencies in the present Parliament with its enormous Liberal majority, but it might easily be a sentence of death for future Liberal Governments with normal majorities. For, if this method were accepted as the legally constituted way of settling differences between the two Houses, the claim would certainly be set up that Parliament had deliberately decided that no legislation to which the Peers objected should be passed unless their delegation could be outvoted in the joint sitting.

III

Holding these views, he took the rather unusual course of issuing a memorandum to his colleagues against the scheme of the Cabinet Committee. This memorandum is so important to the history of the subject that it must be given in full:—

The scheme of the Cabinet Committee appears to be open to three serious objections on principle:—

1. The representation of the Peers by 100 only of their number is difficult to justify. The best justification is that 100 is a very liberal estimate of the number of working Peers, the remainder of the Peers consisting of infants, invalids, and a voting reserve of persons who never attend unless summoned by an urgent party whip. But it will be difficult to make the plain man understand how a vote in which the whole of one body and only a fraction of the other is entitled to share can properly be described as a joint vote of the two bodies. And a scheme which is to obtain general assent should be easily intelligible to the plain man.

2. The scheme suggests a return, with modifications, to the old plan of formal Conferences between the two Houses. But an assembly of 770 persons is too big for a Conference. It will be

a multitude, a mob. Any real deliberation or discussion and any diplomatic give-and-take arrangement will be impossible. The question at issue will be decided by vote, and the voting will be on strict party lines. The object of a Conference is the reconciliation of, or a compromise between, conflicting views. But to attain this object the number must be small—the smaller the better—and the proceedings must be private and informal.

3. Unless the Government can count on a working majority of about 70 in the Commons the scheme will break down. And a Government with a smaller majority will be in a worse plight than they are at present. For the Lords will argue that special machinery has been devised for settling differences between the two Houses, and will refuse to give way unless resort is had to that machinery.

Apart from the objections on principle, there are difficulties of detail, which may perhaps be surmounted, but which must be thought out.

Where is the Joint Assembly to meet? Only two places suggest themselves: Westminster Hall and the Royal Gallery, beyond the House of Lords. The acoustic qualities of Westminster Hall are notoriously bad; those of the Royal Gallery are not good. In each place elaborate arrangements will be required, especially for taking divisions.

Who is to preside?

What is to be the procedure? In joint Committees of the two Houses the procedure of the House of Lords is observed. But the antiquated procedure of the House of Lords, with a powerless Chairman, and without the closure, is unsuitable to a business assembly. The procedure will apparently have to be regulated by Standing Orders, in which both Houses must agree. But it may be difficult to obtain agreement.

Are the sittings of the House of Commons to be suspended while the Joint Assembly sits? Apparently they must. But the proceedings of the Joint Assembly at the Committee stage of a Bill may take a long time.

Is the so-called joint vote more than a device—and a rather transparent device—for disguising the proposition that, in case of difference between the two Houses, the opinion of the elective House must eventually prevail? And, if so, is it not open to the same objections, and will it not encounter the same opposition as the suspensory veto?

It must be remembered that the principle of the suspensory veto—namely, that the House of Commons must eventually



SIR HENRY CAMPBELL BANNERMAN WITH ONE OF HIS FAVOURITE
FRENCH BULL TERRIERS AT BELMONT CASTLE [illegible]

p 361

prevail—has been admitted by responsible Conservative speakers in the House of Lords, and is recognised by authoritative writers on English constitutional law. 'The general rule,' says Professor Dicey, 'that the House of Lords must, in matters of legislation, ultimately give way to the House of Commons, is one of the best-established maxims of constitutional law.'[1] And statements to the same effect are to be found in other works of authority. The difference between Conservatives and Liberals as to the application of the principle is this: The former contend that the question whether the majority of the Commons faithfully represent the will of the people on a given issue must be tested by a general election before the Lords give way. The latter deny the right of the Lords to demand what is substantially a plebiscite, a mandate, or a *referendum*, and say that, as between Lords and Commons, the voice of the Commons must be taken to represent the popular will.

The most serious objection to what has been called the suspensory veto proposal, namely, the proposal that the power of the House of Lords to throw out a Bill should be restricted to a single Session, is that it practically abolishes the legislative power of the House of Lords as a second Legislative Chamber. The House of Commons has only to say the same thing twice and it becomes law, just as a Mahommedan husband, by pronouncing the words of divorce three times, can get rid of his wife. But may not this objection be mitigated, if not removed, by securing intervals and opportunities for reflection, deliberation, and negotiation before the final decisive word is spoken?

An alternative plan, which would depart less from existing practice than the plan suggested by the Cabinet Committee, is suggested for consideration, and could, it is submitted, if adopted, be worked more easily. Like the plan of the Cabinet Committee, it would involve legislation. The terms of the Bill would be somewhat as follows:—

1. If in any Session a Bill sent from the House of Commons to the House of Lords fails to become law, by reason of the House of Lords having rejected the Bill, or postponed its consideration, or made amendments to which the House of Commons does not agree, a Conference shall, unless the Government otherwise determine, be held between Members appointed by the House of Lords and the House of Commons respectively, with the view of arriving at a settlement of the difference between the

[1] *Law of the Constitution*, 6th edition, p. 402.

CHAP. XXXV. 1907. two Houses. [Or the Conference might, if preferred, be held at an earlier stage.]

2. If, after the Conference, the Bill is reintroduced into the House of Commons, with or without modifications, and is again sent to the House of Lords, and again fails to become law, it may, in the next subsequent Session, be again introduced in the form which it was last agreed to by the House of Commons, and if passed by the House of Commons in that form, and again sent to the House of Lords, it shall, in default of agreement between the two Houses, have effect as if passed by both Houses, and shall be enacted in the customary words accordingly.

Let us see how this would work out in the case of a Bill like the Education Bill of last Session.

The Bill is killed by disagreement between the two Houses.

An interval elapses, during which public opinion may be sounded, tested, and organised, and the situation is reviewed.

After the interval, presumably at the beginning of the next Session, each House appoints, say, five or ten of its Members to meet in conference the representatives of the other House. In the total number of representatives the Government might find itself in a minority. But this would not matter, for the object of a Conference is, not to enable one party to outvote the other, but to enable each party to negotiate and to seek for a common measure of agreement. In this respect the position of the members of a Conference resembles that of an Arbitrator in a trade dispute, except that they can only recommend, not decide. The proceedings at the Conference would be private and informal, like the proceedings at the informal Conferences now held on Lords' amendments.

The Conference might make recommendations which the Government would find itself able to adopt.

In that case, the Government might reintroduce the Bill with the modifications recommended.

On the other hand, the Conference might be unable to make recommendations which the Government could accept, or unable to make any recommendations at all.

In either of these cases the Government would be free to reintroduce their Bill in any form they thought fit. They might make it either longer or shorter, stronger or milder, or reintroduce it in its original shape.

They would take care to limit the time for the different stages of the Bill in the House of Commons, and to restrict discussion, so far as possible, to the new matter introduced.

If this were done, the Bill could be sent to the Lords pretty early in the Session, and the Lords would have a second opportunity of considering it. If there were a second deadlock there would be a prorogation, and a second Session would be held later on in the same year. At this Session the Bill would be introduced in the form last agreed to, passed swiftly through the Commons, and sent to the Lords, with an intimation that, unless passed in that form by the House of Lords, it would be passed over their heads. But even at the eleventh hour concessions might be made by the Commons, if they thought fit to make them, and the Bill might be passed by both Houses in the usual way.

It may be said that this procedure, occupying much of the time of three Sessions, would involve intolerable delay. But, in the first place, delay is desirable and necessary before resorting to the extreme course of overriding the House of Lords. What is necessary is to avoid the risk of hasty or arbitrary action. As a Bill has, for this reason, to be read three times before it can be passed by either House, so a Bill would have to be passed three times by one House before that House is allowed to override the other House. In the next place, the procedure would not be adopted except in the case of measures of first-class importance. And, lastly, the necessity for adopting the procedure would not often arise. What is essential is, that the power of overriding the Lords should be available as a last resort. If such a power existed the Lords would, except when dealing with a shaky Government or towards the close of a Parliament, practically always give way at an earlier stage.—(May 31, 1907.)

Another plan much canvassed at the time, that of submitting Bills held up by the House of Lords to a referendum, was also examined and rejected on the double ground that it would be destructive of Parliamentary Government and that, if entrusted to the existing House of Lords, the power of forcing a plebiscite would merely arm it with another weapon against Liberal Governments. After long debate and not without lively differences of opinion, the Cabinet found common ground in the suspensory veto, originally proposed by John Bright, which Campbell-Bannerman himself had always favoured and which was advocated in this memorandum.

It fell to him on Monday, June 24, to explain this plan

CHAP. XXXV. 1907.

to the House of Commons, and to propose a resolution intended, according to constitutional practice, to be the foundation of legislation in the session of the next year. Though his hearers were unaware of it, the occasion put a severe strain on him. He had been due to spend the week-end at Windsor, and though by a genial conspiracy between his private secretary, Mr. Ponsonby, and Lord Knollys, he had been released from this, he had been in duty bound to attend a royal garden party at Windsor, given in honour of the King of Siam. There he caught a chill and on the Sunday morning he had another heart attack. He pulled himself together and determined to proceed with his speech, but his secretary sat under the gallery with remedies in a despatch-box, ready to defy the rules of the House and jump over the partition if the attack were renewed. All went well, and his supporters were delighted to have at length a definite plan which would end empty denunciation and concentrate their energies upon action. He began by a general view of the situation. All parties, he claimed, were agreed that the will of the people must prevail in the long run, and unless the method of plebiscite or referendum were adopted, it could only be ascertained by taking the elective House as its exponent. Where parties differed was as to the point at which the House of Commons was to prevail, and what he had specially to complain of was the perpetual flouting of House of Commons opinion by leaders who had a duty to respect it.

I cannot conceive of Sir Robert Peel or Mr. Disraeli treating the House of Commons as the Rt. Hon. gentleman [Mr. Balfour] has treated it. Nor do I think there is any instance in which as leaders of Opposition they committed what I can only call the treachery of openly calling in the other House to override this House. These great statesmen were House of Commons men. I venture to say that if Bills were mutilated or rejected elsewhere, when Sir Robert Peel sat on that bench it was not done at his instance. The Rt. Hon. gentleman's course has, however, had one indisputable effect. It has left no room for doubt, if it ever existed before, that the Second Chamber was being utilised as a mere annexe of the Unionist Party.

Here he expressed the growing exasperation of his party, not merely at the House of Lords, but at Mr. Balfour's handling of it, his habit, as used to be said at the time, of 'signalling to it' to come to his rescue not on great emergencies affecting national interests, but on measures which, however important, touched mainly the interests of the Unionist Party. Warming to his theme, the Prime Minister professed a robust faith in 'the good sense, the wisdom, the righteousness, and the patriotism of our country'; and while inviting 'the fullest use in all matters of the experience, wisdom, and patriotic industry of the House of Lords in reviving and amending and securing full consideration for legislative measures,' he yet declared his principle to be that 'the Commons shall prevail.'

The scheme, as explained by the Prime Minister, differed in certain respects from the provisions of the Parliament Act introduced and passed in 1910. Common to both is the principle that a Bill from which the Lords dissent must be passed three times in the Commons before it becomes law, but whereas in the original proposal this process might have been completed after six months' interval from the first rejection, in the Parliament Act it is spread over at least two years, and the Bill must be reaffirmed in the Commons in three separate sessions. Again, in 1907 the possibility of the Lords rejecting a Budget appears not to have been contemplated, and the scheme accordingly contained none of the provisions for Money Bills which appear in the Parliament Act. On the other hand, the scheme contained a proposal for a Conference between 'a small number of nominated representatives' of the two Houses after each rejection by the Lords, which was omitted from the Parliament Act.

IV

A long, animated, and at times stormy debate occupied the next three days. Mr. Balfour retorted by charging the Prime Minister with deliberately trying to pick a quarrel with the Lords, and denounced him as belonging to the

CHAP. XXXV. 1907. school of Radicalism which was for ever trying to alter the legislative machinery and framed its social legislation for the express purpose of getting it rejected. To Mr. Balfour the House of Lords, as it existed, was an excellent means of 'averaging opinion,' and he did not think any better could be devised. Mr. Lloyd George, in spite of the warnings from high quarters, delivered a philippic which showed no sign of any chastening hand. The House of Lords, he said, had been called the watch-dog of the Constitution, but it was really 'Mr. Balfour's poodle.' Mr. Churchill said it was 'a one-sided, hereditary, unprized, unrepresentative, irresponsible absentee.' A Labour amendment moved by Mr. Henderson declared flatly that it represented interests that were opposed to the general well-being, that it was a hindrance to national progress and ought to be abolished. The House of Commons was content for the moment with the Prime Minister's resolution, which declared that 'in order to give effect to the will of the people, as expressed by their elected representatives, the power of the other House to alter or reject Bills passed by this House must be restricted by law as to secure that within the limits of a single Parliament, the final decisions of the Commons should prevail.' This was carried by 432 to 147. The Opposition were not alarmed: they argued that the Government had chosen the method of procedure by resolution not for the high constitutional reasons alleged, but because they wished to shelve the question and were yet under the necessity of appeasing their followers. The wisdom of this estimate of the situation was tested in 1910. Fate decreed that this should be the last act in the drama for Campbell-Bannerman, but he was seriously in earnest about it, and he contributed powerfully and indeed decisively to shaping the policy which was carried out in 1910.

In all the circumstances the session of 1907 had been brilliantly retrieved. The Army had been reconstituted; a substantial beginning made with land reform, a large number of useful measures carried, and the ground cleared

for the inevitable battle with the House of Lords. In his Budget Mr. Asquith had made the important distinction between earned and unearned incomes, which in effect reduced the average rate of income-tax from 1s. to 9¾d., and the promise of economy had been fulfilled by large retrenchments in the fighting services. The Government had lost one seat at a by-election in the Brigg Division, and the return of Labour and Socialist candidates to fill two other vacancies had been a warning to all parties of a new tendency, but the Liberal movement, so far, had suffered no serious set-back, and the Prime Minister's personal position was stronger than ever.

This position, however, had its dangers, and events conspired to throw on him more than one man could bear. He was expected to see everybody, to find the appropriate word for the disappointed Radical and the alarmed Whig, to appear at all difficult moments on the front bench, to show civility and hospitality to the influential supporter, the Dominion Premier, the distinguished foreigner. Then there were the innumerable minor matters which the Prime Minister has to attend to, and not least the always tiresome question of patronage and honours. He was genuinely surprised that so many unexpected people wished to be ennobled, but if it really gave them pleasure, he was inclined to say 'Why not!' provided scandal was avoided and the list kept within the moderate limits that was thought becoming in the days before the war. As the day approached, he devoted an hour or two to going through the applications and recommendations before their submission to the King; and the occasion provided a rare opportunity for his remarkable gift of summarising character in a sentence. Those who were privileged to be present on these occasions spent a very agreeable hour. In ecclesiastical appointments he was most careful and conscientious, seeking the best advice, and often in the end going his own way. His own inclination was to promote Liberals and Evangelicals. The High Church Party had, he thought, had more than its share under recent

CHAP. XXXV. 1907.

Administrations, and Ritualists were never in his good books. But he always took this part of his work very seriously, and would not make even minor appointments until Mr. Higgs, the secretary who kept his conscience in this matter, had made the most careful inquiries.

Deputations also were innumerable, and the deputations of this time were very different from the staid solemnities usually associated with that word. M.P.'s streamed into his room by the score in a state of effervescence which the blandishments of the Whips had failed to subdue. The vexed question of the appointment of magistrates, on which the Lord Chancellor had made judicial virtue seem a little bleak to a party complaining of its long exclusion from the seat of justice, called for an incessant soothing of ruffled feelings. All these claims on him he met with good humour and sometimes with genuine pleasure, but his friends could not disguise from themselves that he showed signs of physical strain, and those who had witnessed his illness in the previous year began to be seriously anxious about the result if this pressure continued.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE FINAL RALLY

An Interval at Belmont—The Russian Agreement—Letter to Mme. de Novikoff—Freedom of Montrose—A Portrait of Himself—A Birthday Letter—Freedom of Edinburgh—The Autumn Campaign—The Attack on the Lords—Foreign Affairs—Last Words on South Africa—The Railway Strike—A Disastrous List of Engagements—Heart Attack at Bristol—Ordered Abroad—Illness in Paris—At Biarritz.

THE Marienbad habit was at last broken, and this year he remained in London till the end of August, witnessing the prorogation of Parliament on the 26th and winding up his business in Downing Street for another three days. On the 29th he went to Belmont and there spent the first anniversary of his wife's death—a date (August 30) briefly marked in his diary as 'Dies illa lacrimabilis.' For the next few weeks he enjoyed such idleness as is possible to a Prime Minister who has a large correspondence and the daily pile of boxes and pouches to dispose of. The session had been a heavy drain on his strength, and with his wife no longer at hand to guard him from incessant calls on his good nature and his sense of duty, he had loaded himself with engagements and spent long hours in the House of Commons. To work and society he now looked for relief from the depression which fell on him when he was unoccupied and alone. His visitors during the next few weeks included his old friend the Bishop of Bristol, Lord Crewe, Mr. Morley, and Sir James Guthrie, the President of the Royal Scottish Academy (who came to paint his portrait), and all the time his Scottish neighbours and constituents were coming and going.

On August 31 came a letter from Sir Edward Grey

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907. announcing the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention concerning Persia. In this the two Powers, while expressing their desire to maintain the integrity of that country and to allow all nations equal facilities of trade within, defined their respective spheres of influence, Russia taking the north and Great Britain the south, and each undertaking not to seek concessions for itself, whether political or commercial, or to oppose the concessions of the other, outside its own sphere. Since the northern part of Persia is by far the richer, the commercial side of this arrangement was obviously favourable to Russia, but in the eyes of the Government the compensating advantages of its strategic and political side were of the highest importance. It extinguished the fear of a Russian invasion of India, which for generations had been an intermittent nightmare of the British people, and removed all motive for Russian intrigues in Afghanistan or elsewhere on the Indian frontier. 'The Russians,' wrote Sir Edward Grey, 'have eventually accepted a proposal which was agreed upon after consultation between Morley, Ritchie, Nicolson, Hardinge, and myself. Nicolson went back with it to St. Petersburg. Isvolsky would not have it at first, but has eventually found in it a compromise with his own opponents on the Council of Ministers at St. Petersburg. Nicolson has, as usual, been invaluable, never missing a point, and with excellent judgment; so has Hardinge with his knowledge both of the Russian Government and of Persia, and his clear view as to the good policy of an agreement. But without Morley we should have made no progress at all, for the Government of India would have blocked every point, and Morley has removed mountains in the way of negotiations.' Campbell-Bannerman left the details to these experts, but, as will be seen presently, he was thoroughly in accord with the policy of the Russian Convention, which he regarded as entirely in line with the Gladstonian Liberal tradition on the right attitude towards Russia.

His personal attitude towards Russia may be inferred

from a letter written earlier in the year to Madame de Novikoff, who had complained that the British proposals for the Hague Conference were tantamount to an anti-Russian demonstration :— CHAP. XXXVI. ÆT. 71.

Campbell-Bannerman to Madame de Novikoff

10 DOWNING STREET, *Feb.* 27, '07.—I am exceedingly sorry that you should have been vexed and made anxious on account of some rumours or impressions which are wholly unfounded and grotesque.

I can only say that I have never heard a word which could justify the idea that we 'wish to keep Russia in her present condition, without fleet or army.' Neither among my colleagues who are directly concerned and who therefore speak seriously and with responsibility, nor among others who have no personal responsibility and are therefore more likely to speak lightly and even recklessly, has any such conception ever been shown to me. On the contrary, they seem to be perfectly at one with the declared and sincere policy of the Government, which is to promote in every possible way friendship—and not only 'correct' friendship, but real friendly feeling—with your country. That was our declared policy when in Opposition and it remains. We wish to come to an amicable and mutually fair and just understanding on all points: and it appears to me that M. Isvolsky and Sir A. Nicolson have worked hard for this and if left to themselves would accomplish it. I hope they will.

As to an 'Anti-Russian demonstration at the Hague,' I honestly do not know what you mean. Russia invented the Hague Conference, and her chief topic was the necessity of putting a check on the ruinous race of expenditure. We cordially supported her, and we are of the same mind still. This is not directed against A. or B. or any other country, and it involves no idea so absurd as enforcing retrenchment upon any unwilling Power.

But we wish to strengthen the general opinion of Europe in favour of peace, arbitration, and relief from waste on arms. We make no hypocritical pretence in this last matter: we do not conceal that our main motive is to save our own taxpayer, and to spend his money on more useful and profitable objects. But this can be no offence or damage to any of our neighbours.

I do earnestly hope that if you are beset by any nightmare of a sinister purpose entertained here against your country, you will rid yourself of it, for it is an absolute illusion.

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907.

I saw Mr. Martens[1] twice—once he lunched here, and I am sure he got no evil impression whatever.

On September 27 he went to Montrose to receive the freedom of the burgh, and to open a bazaar for the benefit of the golf club. Here he launched out into a eulogy of the 'small burghs' and the part that they play in the national life, contrasting their 'sweet clean air and wholesome society with the conditions of those appalling human whirlpools which are called great cities.' At the bazaar he recalled how he 'often came over from the banks of the North water to Montrose and thought he played golf. He raised a good deal of their best turf and he smashed a good many of his best clubs and he called that playing golf.' Comparing the old golf with the new, he sighed a little over modern developments and asked regretfully whether the game had not 'lost some of its old savour, become a little vulgarised.' In a third speech delivered at a luncheon he painted a characteristic portrait of himself:—

I do not know what to say in response to the kind things that have been said of me. I owe much—far more than I can tell—to my honest constituents who have stood loyally to me for something like 39 years, so long that I begin to forget the count. I owe a great deal to the House of Commons, which has always been good natured and indulgent, and forgiving and appreciative. I owe a great deal to my own followers there—now a terrible host of them—who present me no difficulties at all, I am bound to say, no attempt at derisive courses or backslidings, or, what is almost worse, forward-slidings. I owe a great deal to my opponents in the House of Commons, who have always been kindly and friendly and considerate; and altogether, I have no fault to find with anybody. And it is because I have no fault to find with anybody that I am where I am. It has not been—as I keep saying until people may think it is a piece of affectation on my part—it has not been by my seeking that I am where I am, but simply because I have gone straight forward and find myself there without knowing very well how I came there. An old friend of mine, Wilfrid Lawson, who was full of worldly wisdom and a true statesman—although many people thought of him as nothing

[1] Russian Representative at the Hague Conference.

but a water-drinker and a temperance fanatic—was accustomed to say, 'The man who walks on a straight road never loses his way.' Well, I flatter myself that I have walked on a pretty straight road, probably because it was easier, and accordingly I have not gone astray. I trust that that will continue to the last, which cannot be long deferred now.

With all these engagements, he found time to remember the birthday of a little friend aged two, Margaret Sinclair, the god-daughter of his wife, to whom he wrote :—

On the eve of Peggy's birthday—which is 12th October (born 1905).

BELMONT CASTLE, *11th Oct.* 1907.

MY DEAR PEGGY,—Let me wish you many, many happy returns of your birthday, and may you live to be a joy and blessing to all around you.

I have to write in the place of your godmother, who was a warm admirer of yours, and much interested in you because of her affection for your father and mother.

You will not remember her, and it has pleased God that she should be taken away before ever you came to know her. But in this, as in all things, I try to put myself in her place so far as I can, and I am sure she would like me to send you a message of affectionate congratulation on your birthday. And at the same time I send you a portrait of her, that when you are a little older you may understand that this is the likeness of a true friend and well-wisher. You were always so contented and smiling and gay that she used to speak of you as 'Baby Sunshine,' and the sight of you, and even the thought of you, cheered her, and brightened for her the last months of her life, which were months of pain, feebleness, and distress. She also, like you, was of a gay nature, and she had been a merry child. And in her last summer, when the sun shone into her bedroom, she would often repeat the words of a well-known song :—

'I love the merry merry sunshine,
It makes the heart so gay
To hear the little birds all singing
In their summer holiday.'

Good-bye, then, Baby Sunshine; may you never, as the years pass over you, lose anything of your blithe happy spirit; and so will you best please your good father and mother and do your

duty to the good God who implanted that spirit in you.—Yours affectionately, H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

With the letter came a brooch and a note in his own handwriting :—

1st Jany. 1907.

(With the gift of a brooch.)

A child's brooch, with small rubies, diamonds, and pearls, worn by Lady Campbell-Bannerman when a child, and preserved by her in memory of her childhood. She would not have wished it to pass to any one so gladly as to her dear god-daughter, Margaret Ishbel Sinclair : it takes with it her love and blessing.

H. C.-B.

From Montrose he went on to Balmoral on a visit to the King, and reports 'all pleasant and smiling' there. The party he records as 'George Sydenham (Clarke), French, Mackenzie Wallace,' with 'Knollys in one of the small houses.' There was 'a rock of offence' about the Liverpool bishopric, in which the King favoured one candidate and he another, but he does not give the details and it appears to have been amicably settled. By the 2nd of October he was back at Belmont, but unfortunately not for any prolonged repose.

'Freedoms' now rained upon him. Within a week Peebles followed the example of Montrose, and on the last day of October Edinburgh paid him the same compliment. Seizing hold of the fact that the day chosen was the 200th anniversary of the Union of Scotland and England, he discoursed in his reply upon the 'mighty combination of the two countries,' and its 'profound effect for good upon the world,' and wound up with an eloquent eulogy of the city of Edinburgh with which, as he asserted, only four other cities were comparable as fellows or rivals—Athens, Prague, Toledo, and Buda-Pesth. Nothing on this occasion gave him greater pleasure than the presence of Lord Rosebery, himself a famous citizen of Edinburgh, who joined with his brother Scots in this tribute to an eminent Scotsman.

II

In the meantime he had mapped out for himself a scheme

of autumn and winter speeches dealing with the dominant theme of the House of Lords. More and more he seemed to be shut in to that subject. It was true that the session of 1907 had been skilfully retrieved, and he was able quite sincerely to write his congratulations to the Chief Whip, Mr. George Whiteley,[1] of whose ability and sagacity he had the highest opinion :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. George Whiteley

BELMONT, *Sept.* 2, '07.—You know what everybody has been saying for the last week? That the splendid success of our session is due to the driving force and courage of the Chief Whip. And so say I. I assure you it is universally felt, and you have your reward now for all your labour and sacrifices.

I need not tell you how warmly I feel about it; and I am doubly glad for Mrs. Whiteley's sake, who has borne the brunt of it all even more than yourself.

But while paying this tribute to Mr. Whiteley he was well aware that, so far as legislation was concerned, the Government was very nearly at the end of its tether, and that no skill or energy on the part of Ministers or Chief Whips could save it from discredit or decline, if the promised way of dealing with the House of Lords could not be found. So far as the eye could see in the autumn of 1907, the veto on all the major objects of Liberal policy was absolute. The Education Bill had been wrecked; the Licensing Bill now in preparation would almost certainly meet the same fate; the Irish question was hopelessly blocked; the experience of the last session had shown that rigid limits were imposed upon even moderate land reform in England and in Scotland. The alternatives before the Government were either to accept these conditions and be content with the minor legislation and administrative changes which were within the boundaries imposed by the House of Lords, or to go forward boldly and challenge that House. Campbell-Bannerman was never in doubt about the choice between those alternatives. Submission, as he believed, would be

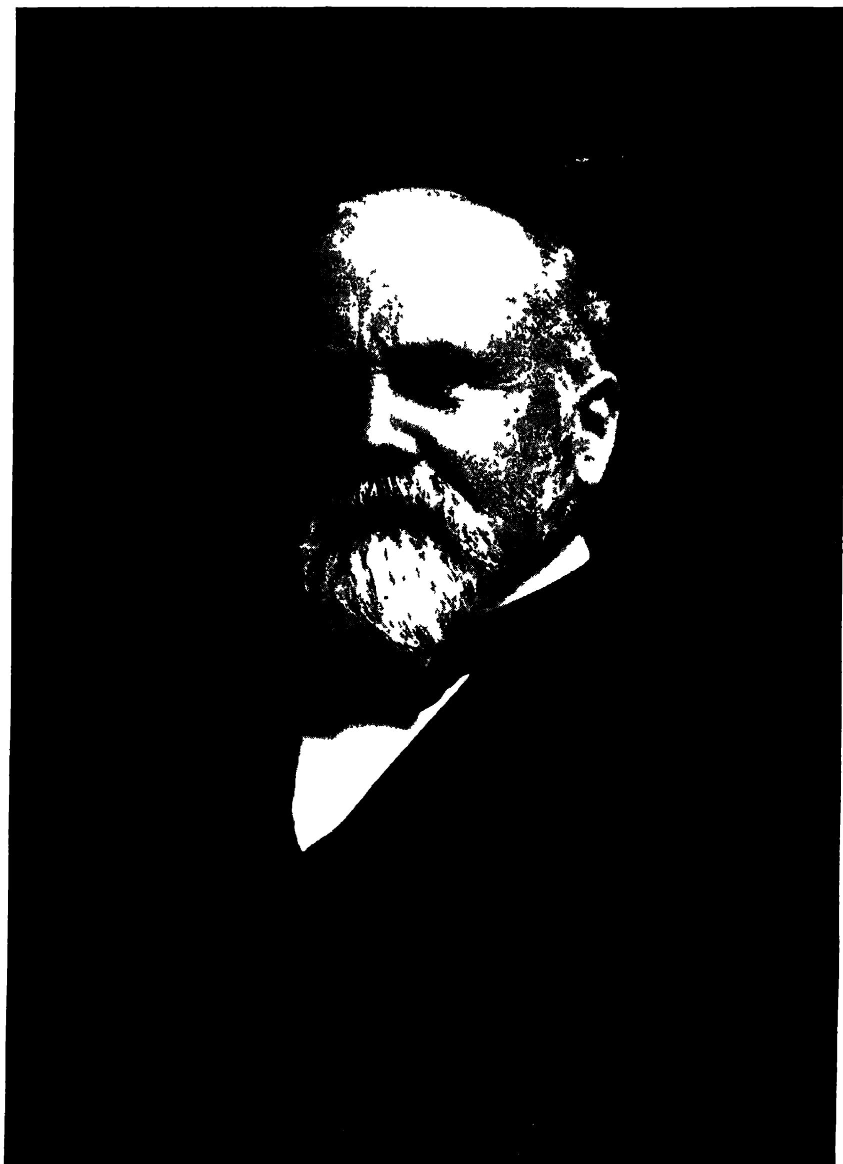
[1] Now Lord Marchamley.

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907. death to Liberalism; and a long term of inglorious office on sufferance of the House of Lords was the last thing that he contemplated either for himself or his Government.

The treatment by the Lords of the two Scottish Land Bills made Scotland favourable ground for the attack, and in a speech at Edinburgh on October 7 he charged the Lords not only with having mutilated these Bills, but with having denied the Scotsman's right to separate legislation. The refusal of the Peers to proceed with the Scottish Bill until the English Small Holdings Bill was before them was, he declared, an 'extraordinary and unprecedented incident.' A 'new Act of Union was passed, was thrust upon us *ad hoc* by the Unionist Peers, and the land from John o' Groat's to the Land's End was to be dealt with on the assumption that my Lord Lansdowne had abolished or dried up the Tweed.' An elaborate defence of the rejected measures as both necessary and suitable to Scottish conditions led up to a general indictment of the Lords for their conduct since the beginning of 1906, and an exposition of the Government plan for the suspensory veto. The meeting was crowded and excited, and its opinion seemed to be that this plan, if anything, fell short of what was necessary. There were interrupters who wanted to end and not to mend the House of Lords.

He was at Dunfermline on the 22nd, unfolding the same tale, and enforcing the moral in a speech which was fated to be the last of the long series that he had made to his constituents. Here he stepped aside for a moment to glance at foreign affairs and, in a reply to Mr. Walter Long, who had reproached him with having ignored foreign relations in his haste to attack the House of Lords at Edinburgh, he paid a warm tribute to Sir Edward Grey:—

Foreign relations indeed! Why, by common consent never have they been managed with more conspicuous ability and success than by Sir Edward Grey. We have thrown our whole energies on the side of peace, amity, and arbitration; and if, in face of great difficulties and, we think, prejudices we have not achieved all that we desired, we have at least done our best and



RIGHT HONOURABLE JAMES A. CAMPBELL OF STRACATHRO, M.P.

ELDER BROTHER OF SIR HENRY CAMPBELL BANNERMAN

p. 378

we have left no doubt upon which side in all such questions the British power is to be reckoned. . . . We are well justified in disclaiming any idea of hostility or aggression towards any of our neighbours; and as regards the most recent incident, the arrangement with Russia as to our mutual interests in Asia, I would only say that for many years—certainly for fifteen years to my knowledge, because I remember certain circumstances that recall that time to me—it has been a part of the avowed policy of the Liberal Party; and it is an arrangement which can only conduce to peace, good feeling, and the saving of cost all round. I am not sure that during any part of these fifteen years that policy has been looked upon with much favour by Mr. Long and his friends.

Czarist Russia, by its proceedings in Persia, made it somewhat more difficult than Campbell-Bannerman anticipated for British Liberals to take unalloyed satisfaction in this agreement, but to his eye an agreement with Russia was the proper complement to the Anglo-French understanding and a guarantee of peace in a sphere which had been full of difficulty and anxiety. At Dunfermline again he spoke what was destined to be his last word on the subject of South Africa:—

I turn now to the British Empire itself. What has this Government, which is said to neglect and estrange the Colonies, done in that quarter? I do not wish to boast. I wish to use the language of moderation, but it is difficult to apply language of moderation which shall be true to the situation. No incident in the whole Colonial history of our country, not excepting even the great Canadian settlement, has been more splendid in its lesson to ourselves and to the world than the free institutions given to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony. We at least have shown that we know how to consolidate and amalgamate civilised communities under the British Crown.

This was his final retort to Lord Milner, who in a speech at Rugby three days earlier (Oct. 19) had denounced the South African policy of the Government in unmeasured terms, and declared it to be 'injurious to ourselves and base to our friends.'

III

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907.

The Dunfermline speech completed his Scottish engagements, and on the 2nd of November he returned to Downing Street, where his presence was urgently needed. A serious dispute had broken out between the Railway Companies and the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, principally on the subject of 'recognition' of the Unions, and for a few days the country seemed to be on the verge of a railway strike. There was widespread alarm, and the Government had to prepare for the worst, but, thanks mainly to the skill and adroitness of Mr. Lloyd George, then President of the Board of Trade, this calamity was averted at the eleventh hour, and both companies and men induced to accept a scheme of conciliation and arbitration. Campbell-Bannerman took a keen interest in the negotiations which led to this conclusion, and kept a cool head in its most difficult moment. When it ended, his admiration for the part which Mr. Lloyd George had played was unbounded, and he seized the opportunity to write a warm eulogy of his colleague to King Edward :—

Campbell-Bannerman to King Edward

SIR,—I have the honour, with my humble duty, to enclose for Your Majesty's information a memorandum just received from Mr. Lloyd George intimating the happy results of the negotiations he has been conducting between the Railway Directors and the Railwaymen. He describes in a summary way the nature of the arrangement, embodied in a document signed by both parties; but, apart from the particular merits of the plan, it is a matter of sincere rejoicing that a solution has been found. On this beneficent result I venture humbly to offer my congratulations to Your Majesty, who takes so deep an interest in all that concerns the peace, contentment, and prosperity of your people.

I would further venture to say that the country is largely indebted for so blessed a conclusion of a time of great anxiety and danger to the knowledge, skill, astuteness, and tact of the President of the Board of Trade and those around him in his Department.—With profound respect, I remain, Sir, Your Majesty's humble and obedient servant,

Nov. 8, 1907. H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

The settlement of the railway dispute brought no repose to the Prime Minister, and for once in his life he seemed to desire none. At Montrose he had spoken of the 'end' which could not now be long deferred, but this had seemed only the conventional language of a man of seventy and upwards, and it is doubtful if he himself meant anything more. But there was a limit beyond which a man of his years, and still more a man who had had warnings of serious illness a few months earlier, could not go, and, as his friends saw, he was in grave danger of exceeding it. The list of engagements which he had made for himself or which he was bound to fulfil in the second week of November 1907 was in fact disastrous. By an unhappy mischance the visit of the German Emperor [1] to Windsor coincided with a crowded week of other engagements and anxieties, and all seemed equally imperative and unavoidable. The Prime Minister was bound to make his annual speech at the Guildhall; the Prime Minister was bound to be present when the German Emperor visited the Sovereign; the Prime Minister would cause deep disappointment to his own friends if he failed to appear at the annual Colston Banquet at Bristol. None of these fixtures could be cancelled without explanations which would cause widespread gossip and uneasiness about his health and capacity. There was a fatality of compulsion in all the circumstances, and, though the risk was evident, there seemed to be no way out of it. Mr. Ponsonby, who had gone to live with him in Downing Street, fought incessantly to protect him; but he too was baffled.

The time-table worked out inexorably. On November 9

[1] An awkward question which had given the Prime Minister a good deal of trouble had arisen about the visit. The Emperor had wished to bring with him, in addition to the Minister in Attendance, the German Chancellor Prince Bülow. The Foreign Office objected that this would give the visit a political significance which was not desirable at that moment, and had pointed out that one Minister in Attendance was the universal rule and that the King had taken no one but Lord Selborne with him when he visited the German Emperor at Kiel. At the last moment it was found that the state of public business in Germany made it impossible for Prince Bülow to come to London.

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907.

he made his speech at the Guildhall Banquet,[1] in itself a tiring ceremony apart from the strain of speech-making. On the 11th he went to Windsor to meet the German Emperor, and on the 12th he came up from Windsor for a Cabinet and returned to Windsor for the State Banquet. He came back to London the same night, scurried through his correspondence early the next morning, got into uniform and was at the Guildhall again at 11.30 for the civic luncheon to the Emperor. There he had to remain standing for an hour before the Emperor arrived. Luncheon over, he got away with difficulty through crowded streets to catch a train which would bring him to Bristol in time for the Colston Banquet, rushed to the Hall, and wound up the day with an hour's speech on the fiscal question and the House of Lords. Returning exhausted to the house of his Bristol host, Sir W. Howell Davies, across 'the Downs,' instead of going at once to bed he insisted on joining the party in the billiard-room and making himself pleasant to the young people. After every one had gone to bed, the loud and incessant ringing of a bell alarmed the household. His secretary, Mr. Nash, went to his room, where he found him in a state of collapse, but just able to swallow some of the first-aid medicine which stood on a table by his bedside. During the interval before the doctor's arrival, he seemed to be hovering between life and death; but he rallied during the night and early in the morning he was placidly instructing his secretary what steps to take to break the news to Mrs. Morton Campbell and others.

This time it was impossible to keep the news of his illness secret. The newspapers were full of it; Downing Street was bombarded by Ministers, friends, and journalists, and the telephone rang all day. It was the same at Bristol, where a post office official came to take charge of the telephone. From the King downwards inquiries poured in;

[1] He spoke on the Railway settlement and the Hague Conference, frankly expressing his disappointment at the results of the Conference. He also addressed a carefully worded warning to the Belgian people on the subject of abuses in the Congo.

pressmen from London came down, and the patient found himself the centre of something like a storm of solicitude. Alarm and anxiety were expressed on all sides and were evidently genuine. The public had a real affection for him, and immense numbers of Liberals believed that he alone could keep the party together and prevent the great House of Commons majority from breaking into the old schisms and factions. There was no doubt about the strength of his personal position or about the strong desire of his friends that he should go on, but there were doubts and very serious ones whether he could do so without sentencing himself to death. He had his moods of despondency, and there was even a moment when he was heard saying that it would perhaps have been better if he had died. But this depression passed as quickly as it came, and before a week was over his natural optimism had reasserted itself, and his mind was made up to go on. But there were serious talks with friends and doctors, and the medical advice was imperative that he should go right away, and, as far as possible, take complete rest for at least six weeks.

IV

He chose Biarritz, and on the 27th started off with his secretary, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, to Paris, where he stayed at the Hotel Quai d'Orsay. He wandered about shopping for an hour or two in the afternoon, and then dined at Foyot's, when he seemed in the best of spirits. At 1.30 in the morning he had another heart attack, and again for nearly two hours he seemed to be dying, while frantic efforts were made to find a doctor. Fortunately he had been able to rouse Mr. Ponsonby, who was sleeping in an adjoining room, and again the first-aid proved efficacious. When at length the doctor arrived he had recovered consciousness and was talking lightly and joking about his seizure. But the next morning Mr. Ponsonby very wisely decided that to be alone in a French hotel with a Prime Minister who was almost dying in the middle of the night was a heavier responsibility than he could bear, and telegraphed

for Dr. Burnet and Mrs. Morton Campbell to come out before they went farther. As before, he seemed to recover almost completely, but he had to wait for five days before continuing his journey. This time the secret was well kept. A dinner with M. Bourgeois had to be cancelled, but he was able to see M. Bourgeois when he called, and he was so much himself and made so light of his illness that it was not supposed to be more than a passing indisposition.

In company with Mrs. Morton Campbell, Mr. Ponsonby, and Dr. Burnet, he went on to Biarritz on 2nd November and accomplished the journey without further mishap. Dr. Burnet stayed with him three days and then returned to London. The medical verdict was that he was suffering from cardiac asthma brought on by overstrain and derangement of the digestion. The attacks were said not to be dangerous, except in an extreme form, but their recurrence was judged a disquieting symptom. There was a possibility that with rest and careful treatment dangerous developments might be avoided, but it was evident to his friends, when he arrived in Biarritz, that he was definitely on a lower plane of health. He gained ground somewhat during the next few weeks, but the life at Biarritz in the month of December was not altogether to his liking. The weather was bad and the place comparatively empty. The busy world which had kept him amused at Marienbad was at its business elsewhere; he felt his loneliness and was more easily depressed. His nephew, Mr. Hugh Campbell, came out early in December, and he took great pleasure in talks and little walks with Sir Gilbert Parker, who was staying in the same hotel. He had also a sincere liking for Canon Fish (now Archdeacon of Bath), for that winter British Chaplain at Biarritz, who was a frequent visitor. With him he talked over old times, told stories of Mr. Gladstone,[1]

[1] One of the Gladstone stories has a characteristic 'C.-B.' touch. He related how at a certain dinner party to Mr. Gladstone at which he was present a dispute arose as to what Mr. Gladstone had said twenty years before. The host maintained one thing and Mr. Gladstone another, and the host finally appealed to *Hansard* which, as usual, proved Mr. Gladstone right. There was nothing singular in that, added C.-B., and he might not

and discussed the prophet Isaiah. 'I remember,' says the Archdeacon, 'how after one Sunday when in reading Isaiah, I had tried by pauses and change of voice to indicate that different characters were speaking, he said, "I never really understood Isaiah until I read it in Professor Moulton's *Modern Reader's Bible*, a copy of which he most kindly sent for and gave to me. He also introduced me to E. V. Lucas, whose works he said were a great solace to him in hours of weariness."' 'Canon,' said Sir Henry, on another occasion, 'I can leave behind me all public business except the affairs of your Church. These follow me everywhere.' The allusion was to the diocese of Chichester, then vacant, for which he was being hard pressed from various quarters to appoint this man or that. The correspondence was voluminous, but it ended, as usual, in his appointing his own man.

Everything possible was done to relieve him of work and responsibility. At Biarritz the unwelcome figure of the King's Messenger with the white bag of letters and despatches appeared on the scene not oftener than once or twice a week; cipher telegrams were rare; there were few pressing appointments, and no colleagues. He developed his old faculty for amusing himself by watching the little

have recalled it but for a very curious coincidence connected with this episode. The volumes of *Hansard* were in bookcases lining a corridor leading to the butler's pantry, and when the host withdrew the one volume he needed out of hundreds, there exactly behind it was a glass of champagne still fizzing, placed there, as we guessed, to save it from the butler's spoil by a footman who meant to return to it when he got the chance. The Archdeacon also recalls a lively dispute as to the nationality of J. H. Taylor, the famous golf professional, who was then at Biarritz. Mr. Hugh Campbell claimed him as a Scot; the Archdeacon maintained (truly) that he was a Yorkshireman. The discussion became quite energetic, when a King's Messenger who was present put in, 'Well, all I know is that he is a very good sort. My club at home engaged him and another pro. to play an exhibition match at a stated fee. The day was so snowy that they couldn't play and Taylor refused to accept any fee and only took his bare travelling expenses.' Whereupon C.-B. looked up slyly at his nephew and said, 'I'm afraid, Hugh, that is fatal to your contention.' On another occasion, speaking of how long standing at State functions had tried his weak heart, he said, 'You know Lord Lansdowne says that Providence has given royalties a special static muscle.'

CHAP. XXXVI. 1907.

world about him. From his table at dinner he commanded a good field of observation, and comments and speculations concerning his fellow-guests flowed freely. There was a motor expedition into Spain, daily drives and strolls, and occasional luncheon parties. Mr. Ponsonby had to return before Christmas, and shortly after it Mr. Vaughan Nash came out. In January Biarritz began to fill up. Sir John Fisher appeared on the scene, and his old friends the Hallidays, and there were many mild festivities and excursions.

By the middle of January he was bent on returning to London and work, and no argument could induce him to stay longer. On the 16th he journeyed to Paris, where rooms had been taken for him in a quiet hotel in the Rue Cambon, not far from the British Embassy, and here he was visited by the British Ambassador and certain French friends. My wife and I lunched with him there on Sunday the 18th, and found him deeply depressed. That morning he had received two evil pieces of news, the death of Sir Lawson Walton and the result of the Ashburton by-election in which the Government had lost a seat. He had been greatly attached to Sir Lawson Walton, and deeply felt his unexpected death. But I had never before seen him ruffled by any political reverse, let alone a by-election, and when he enlarged on the consequences of this one, and spoke of the fatal encouragement which it would give to the House of Lords in its effort to wreck the Government, and of the hopelessness of his task if the Liberal tide ebbed in the country, I knew that his illness had left a deep mark on him. Instinctively I thought of Goethe's 'Alles ist vorbei.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

Return to London—Ready for the Fray—Cabinet Difficulties —A Navy Crisis—Opening of the Session—Last Speech —Serious Illness—Disquieting Bulletins—Letter to the Cabinet—Mr. Asquith's Answer—Last Interview with King Edward—Visits from Colleagues—The Archbishop of Canterbury—Resignation—Last Days and Death.

TWO days later he returned to London and I saw him again before the end of the week. Then he was a different man, and seemed to have recovered all his old buoyancy and energy. He declared himself greatly better and laughed at the fears which had loomed so large on the Sunday. Contact with friends and colleagues had cheered him up: he was ready for the fray, and confident that the session was going to be a great one. He presided at the Cabinet on the 21st and at all the subsequent Cabinets up to February 12. They were pretty lively Cabinets: the Licensing Bill was being drafted, and a sharp difference of opinion had arisen about the length of the time-limit for compensation; the Naval Estimates were being discussed, and there was a serious crisis between the First Lord (Lord Tweedmouth) and his colleagues about the reductions on which they insisted. Resignations were in the air, and at one moment the First Lord got to the point of announcing his intention of absenting himself from the next day's Cabinet while his colleagues considered his 'last word.' The Prime Minister was bombarded with communications from all the parties to this dispute, which largely centred round the question whether the Admiralty had in fact made the reductions which it promised in the previous year, and if so whether it was entitled to set against them the

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

'automatic' and other increases declared to be unavoidable, but in fact so great as to convert the promised reduction into a considerable net increase. The Cabinet was dismayed at having to present this result to Parliament after its promise of economy; the First Lord was convinced that the security of the country required it. The conflict was renewed year by year for the next five years, and, although there were dramatic changes in the parts played by individuals, always with the same results. The chief part of the vote was settled in Germany by the German naval programme, and the Cabinet could do no more than enforce economy in administration on the Admiralty. On this occasion it appointed a Committee consisting of Mr. McKenna, Mr. Runciman, and Mr. Edmund Robertson, the Secretary to the Admiralty, to explore all possibilities of economy, and Lord Tweedmouth accepted their finding, which brought the projected net increase down from £2,000,000 to £1,250,000. On February 10 the Prime Minister reported to the King that the Naval Lords 'took a most reasonable attitude,' and that the Estimates had been settled on the basis that new construction was to stand 'as the Naval Lords first proposed it.'

Campbell-Bannerman was not in his place when Parliament met on January 29. To his other troubles was now added grave anxiety about his brother, Mr. James Campbell, who was lying seriously ill at Stracathro. He was sincerely attached to his brother, and the fact that they sat on opposite sides of the House had never interfered with their affectionate fraternal relations. Certainly he was making no perfunctory excuse when he pleaded his brother's illness as the reason for his absence, but it was known by this time that there was cause for disquietude about his own health. In his opening speech Mr. Balfour made a reference to both subjects which greatly touched him.

The old animosities had passed, and after two years of the new Parliament affection for 'C.-B.' was a sentiment shared by all parties in the House of Commons. In his absence the debate raged furiously on cattle-driving in

Ireland and the alleged weakness of the Government in refusing to prosecute the notorious instigator, Mr. Ginnell. On February 2 he was in his place again, and moved the vote of condolence on the assassination of the King and Crown Prince of Portugal, and for the next ten days he was present at question time and actively at work on Cabinet and other business.

On February 12 he made a short and business-like statement, introducing the special time-table for the Scottish Small Holdings and Land Valuation Bills, which were now to be passed rapidly through all their stages in the Commons with a view to their submission a second time to the House of Lords at the earliest possible moment. He took a strong interest in these Bills, and had vigorously supported the Scottish Secretary in his efforts to steer them through the cross-currents in the Cabinet and outside; and he spoke with emphasis and energy. This was his last speech, and though *Hansard* reports him as answering questions up to March 10, these answers were given by deputy and he never again left his room in Downing Street after returning to it on the evening of February 12. The same night there was a renewal of the heart trouble with alarming symptoms, and it was all too evident to his friends that the fight was going against him.

II

Much that passed during the two months that his illness lasted is not for the public gaze, but so far as this testing time brought out the characteristics of the man and revealed his qualities there can be no impropriety in recalling it. During the first stages of his illness he still refused to believe that there was anything seriously wrong with him, and would not allow those around him to think that he took a grave view of his own condition. He settled down cheerfully to make the best of it, and sent to his old friend, Mr. T. P. O'Connor, to recommend him some good French books. Influenza, which was prevalent at the time, attacked him immediately after the heart seizure, and he remarked

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

on this that his illness was an accident, 'just like having a broken leg. What, after all, was a broken leg?' Irish business of importance was due in the House on the following Monday, and he was quite resolved to go down and take part in the debate. He was particularly concerned about the terms of an amendment which Mr. (now Sir John) Simon was to move, and sent his secretary to find out if they were approved by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Redmond. The debate, as it turned out, had to be postponed, since Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary, also was laid low with influenza.

There was, of course, no possibility of his going to the House of Commons. The bulletins issued by Sir Thomas Barlow, Dr. Bertram Dawson (now Lord Dawson), and Sir Robert Burnet, the devoted medical adviser of Sir Henry and Lady Campbell-Bannerman, now mentioned for the first time the heart malady from which he was suffering, and the public knew that he was seriously ill. Urgent business was taken to him from the rooms below, and he read important papers and signed documents which could not be dealt with by deputy, but the physical prostration and distress did not admit of more than occasional concentration on business, and, needless to say, his colleagues spared him all possible cause for work and anxiety. For many weeks the Government of the country was carried on with the sick Prime Minister unable to see or consult with his colleagues. Cabinets were summoned without reference to him and decisions taken with such consultation by deputy or in writing as circumstances permitted, and often none was possible. During all this time no word or sign of suspicion or misgiving fell from him. He had implicit confidence in the Cabinet and in the colleague who knew best what was in his mind—Mr. Asquith. The attitude of Ministers towards their chief was a reflection of his own towards them, and they bore without murmuring the burdens and difficulties of the interregnum. So long as he thought he could recover, all were agreed that no word should be spoken of resignation, or anything said

which could damp his spirits or cause him to despond about his own condition. The time came when his own hopes failed, and it became imperative to relieve him of responsibilities which weighed upon his dwindling strength.

At one moment he began to consider whether after all he might not go to the House of Lords, but he spoke of it as a 'humiliation,' and came to the conclusion that it would not lighten his labours, but even possibly involve more speaking than fell on him in the Commons. To retire altogether, if it became necessary, but not to be put on that shelf was his decision. At intervals his mind was as keen and alert as ever. I myself at this time received more than one message from his sick-room about the negotiations which were then going on for the purchase of the *Times*. He was most anxious that the opportunity should be seized to obtain a controlling influence which would enable it to be run as an independent Free Trade organ, and for some weeks previously he had taken a lively personal interest in certain steps projected for that purpose.

At the beginning of March he rallied a little, and on the 3rd he wrote to Mr. Asquith, who was presiding over the Cabinet in his absence :—

Campbell-Bannerman to Mr. Asquith

March 2, '08.—Having had an excellent night following on an equally good day, I cannot let slip so good a time without sending you a word of acknowledgment of all that you and my colleagues have done for me while I have been laid up with this horrid influenza. It was not even simple, straightforward influenza, for it followed from my breakdown in November, from the effects of which Biarritz had completely freed me, and upon a subsequent attack of tracheitis which kept me away from public duty in the early days of the session. And influenza is not content with the benefits that it spreads itself, but it routs about for any recent skeletons that it can find in any cupboard in the human frame. And this, although it didn't add to the seriousness of the case, added to its complications. I have therefore been wholly disqualified from being of any use to my colleagues or to the party, and I can only assure them that my inability

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

to do anything for them has been one prolonged regret and impatience.

Fortunately, however, most of our Bills and other work had been pretty well thought out and they had the advantage of embodying principles which the Government, if it was to exist at all, was bound to give effect to. And as on all these points my views were generally known I flatter myself that I wasn't much missed. This, however, doesn't detract from my deep obligations for the kindness, loyalty, and great consideration shown to me, and I would ask you to convey to the members of the Cabinet, but above all to accept for yourself, my most profound gratitude for their indulgence.

Nothing could be more satisfactory, I would even say (although we neglected (?) to boast in a half-done job) more triumphant, than the progress made with the Licensing Bill and the Education Bill and the question of military expenditure. They all stand clearly before the country in what gentlemen on the other side would no doubt call their naked deformity.

It is precisely because of this deformity we are strong and that the reception of our proposals by our friends has been so hearty.

I can get nothing whatever out of the doctors as to how long I am to expect to be in quarantine. The only thing they say is that nothing must be hurried. They assured me yesterday that nothing that has occurred indicated any serious damage or failure, and I am afraid I must put myself very much in their hands, but I couldn't refrain any longer from assuring you of my deep sense of debt to you for taking my duties in addition to your own (already too great), for the readiness you have always shown to make light of the burden I have had to put upon you, and also I was eager to convey to my good colleagues my strong appreciation of the consideration and kindness with which they have treated me.

Mr. Asquith replied the following day :—

Mr. Asquith to Campbell-Bannerman

March 3, '08.—I read your letter to the Cabinet, and in their name I have to congratulate you on the clear evidence it affords of your mental vigour and of your close and continuous interest in all our affairs.

The Cabinet are most anxious that you should feel that, much as you are missed, they are not only content but eager that you should be relieved of all worry and avoidable responsibility for

as long a time as may be needed for your complete restoration to health. They hope that the time may be short, but there is nothing that they would deprecate more than that you or your advisers should feel that there is any need for hurry.

We all value, and no one more than I, your kind expressions, which go far beyond what any of us feel that we deserve.—Yours always, H. H. ASQUITH.

King Edward asked for daily bulletins, and on March 4, before leaving for Biarritz, came to Downing Street and stayed with him for half an hour. Driving to the garden entrance in the Horse Guards, so as to arrive unnoticed, he entered the house by the terrace window of the Cabinet room, suggesting plans as he walked for the Prime Minister's convalescence, including particularly a visit to Brighton. The sight of the Cabinet room, which he had not visited for many years, recalled memories of Mr. Gladstone. The Prime Minister was in the armchair, to which he was moved, when well enough, in the afternoon; and through the half-closed door, outside which the nurse was standing in readiness for a summons, came the low and measured tones of the two men as they engaged in their last talk. The King's visit greatly moved and encouraged the sick man, and though he never referred to what passed, it became clear later that the King had urged him, if his strength permitted, to defer any thought of resignation until his return at Easter. He was also greatly cheered by the little letters with bunches of violets picked by herself which came from the Queen. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the kindness and sympathy of the Royal Family. All formality was dropped. The private secretary would find the Prince of Wales waiting in his room to hear the latest news, or the Queen in her carriage outside No. 10 bringing messages of sympathy and full of the tenderest solicitude for the patient. Lord Knollys, the King's Private Secretary, gave his aid and counsel without stint, and was a sheet-anchor at this difficult time. On his return from Biarritz, after Campbell-Bannerman's resignation, the King sent Colonel Ponsonby straight from the railway station to

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

inquire, and came himself the following day (Good Friday) in the hope of seeing the late Prime Minister once more. But by this time his condition was desperate, and not even the Sovereign could be admitted to the sick-room. The King left strict injunctions that bulletins should be telegraphed to him at Denmark, where he was then going. 'Don't telegraph to the King,' he said, 'there will be so many kings about. Telegraph to King Edward.'

His inability to see colleagues and friends distressed him, but it was difficult, as he said, to see A. B. and C. unless you went up to Z. But exceptions were made for a few old friends, such as Mr. Asquith, Mr. Morley, Lord Ripon, Mr. Thomas Shaw, Lord Loreburn, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, Mr. Lewis Harcourt, Mr. T. R. Buchanan, and Mr. Sinclair. Mr. Asquith's visit on March 27 gave him peculiar pleasure, and he referred more than once to their 'more than satisfactory' talk. He described Mr. Morley as a 'breath of sunshine,' and greeted him as he entered the room with, 'Well, John, this is a bonnie job.' His last act of patronage (at the end of March) was to recommend Lord Crewe for the Garter, a thing done *con amore*, for there was none of his colleagues whom he thought straighter and wiser or more helpful in council. 'What I specially value,' wrote Lord Crewe on acknowledging this honour, 'is the idea of receiving it from you with whom I have been so proud to be associated as follower and colleague, and for whom I have long entertained an affectionate personal regard. I am deeply sensible of your goodness in thinking of me in the illness which has been so great a sorrow to me—as to your other friends and companions in the Government.'

Always he asked anxiously for news of his brother, and made repeated inquiries for Mr. J. W. Crombie, the member for Kincardineshire and Chairman of the Scottish Liberal M.P.'s, who also lay dangerously ill. The two sufferers greeted each other from their sick-beds: 'I cannot tell you,' said Mr. Crombie, in the last letter that he signed, 'what a pleasure it was to receive your telegram. I do not believe there is any one except yourself who would in the midst

SARAH CHARLOTTE CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN
DAUGHTER OF MAJOR-GENERAL SIR CHARLES BRUCE K.C.B. AND FOR FORTY-SIX YEARS
WIFE AND CONSTANT COMPANION OF SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN P.C., G.C.B., M.P.
DIED AT MARIENBAD IN BOHEMIA ON AUGUST 30 AND WAS BURIED HERE ON SEPTEMBER 3, 1906.
"LA CARA MOGLIE
CHE DI CONFORME COR MI HA DATA IL CIELO."

ALSO BY HER SIDE THE SAID
RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN G.C.B.
BORN SEPTEMBER 7, 1836 ✦ DIED APRIL 22, 1908.
HE REPRESENTED THE STIRLING DISTRICT OF BURGHS IN PARLIAMENT FROM 1868 TO 1908
AND DURING THAT PERIOD HELD MANY OFFICES OF STATE. HE WAS TWICE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR AND
FINALLY FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND PRIME MINISTER. UP TO WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF HIS DEATH
HE WAS AT ONCE LEADER AND FATHER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"MY TRUST IS IN THE TENDER MERCY OF GOD FOR EVER AND EVER"

HEADSTONE, MEIGLE CHURCH
With Memorial Inscription of Sir Henry and Lady Campbell-Bannerman

p. 39

of all your own suffering and work and worry have thought of remembering so obscure a sufferer as myself, and of giving him so much pleasure.' Two days later Mr. Crombie died, and again he dictated a long and sympathetic telegram [1] to Mrs. Eugene Wason, Mr. Crombie's mother-in-law.

One other friend he had at this time of whose visits he spoke always with the warmest appreciation. Towards the end of March the Archbishop of Canterbury asked if Sir Henry would like to see him. The answer was an emphatic 'Certainly.' The Archbishop had been the Prime Minister's guest at Belmont soon after the death of Lady Campbell-Bannerman, he was a brother Scot, and like himself born a Presbyterian. The first visit did so much to cheer and console him that a second was at once arranged, and thenceforward, until the Archbishop was compelled to leave for Canterbury half-way through April, he came almost daily. These visits were a veritable godsend in the dragging misery and monotony of the long succession of days of suffering. They exacted nothing from the sufferer, who listened with delight while the Archbishop talked to him cheerfully of old times or helped him from his own experiences. He was specially pleased with the Archbishop's account of his own feelings during a serious illness which had brought him to death's door—how he could not rise to the heights of spiritual feeling or to the clear apprehension of doctrine, but found himself repeating things that his mother had taught him, lines of hymns, the Scottish Paraphrases, of the Psalms and simple texts. 'That is so with me,' he said. Then he went on to tell the Archbishop how his own feelings were expressed in the text on his wife's grave, 'My trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever.'

[1] 'I was cherishing the hopes of a recovery even after all the mischances of the past. He was a man whom everybody liked, and had great powers—far beyond what he ever had an opportunity of exercising, and for my part I regarded him as one of the best politicians I have ever known. But there is much beyond politics. There is personal friendship. I can assure you that my grief is most sincere and that I cordially share in my humble degree the feeling of loss which his poor wife and all about him must be passing through.'

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

To this he returned again and again in the last days. 'There is One watching over us who will arrange things for the best and we can trust Him. If one had the management of it all oneself, one would make a hopeless mess of it.'

The Archbishop would generally come in by the garden gate, and he sacrificed many hours in waiting while the Prime Minister slept, or in going away and returning when the moment for a visit was unpropitious. On leaving for Canterbury after the resignation, he offered to come up at any moment if he was sent for. Such were the sources from which the dying man drew consolation in the days of his extremity. Every post brought messages and prayers, and a selection of the letters was read to him. A telegram from the Transvaal made him radiant. 'That 's pretty strong,' he said, as he listened to the words of gratitude and affection. Any and every sign from neighbours and friends in his constituency cheered his spirits, and letters from Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Birrell gave him special pleasure.

All his sufferings were stoically borne, and his nurses said that he was the bravest man they had ever nursed. He had intervals of respite when, seated in his chair in the bright and pleasant room, he would recall his favourite stories, skim over the inexhaustible topic of persons and their appearance, not forgetting his pet aversions, and sometimes expressing incisive opinions about the familiar figures on the front bench opposite. Or he looked out of window across the Horse Guards Parade, and wondered why so many fewer people seemed to go home that way than he remembered in former days. Or he would sit with a paper or book in his hands, looking up now and again to admire the flowers in the room or to ask to be fanned, complaining sometimes that the air wanted 'kick and snap.' Of politics he spoke little, but he brooded over the question of resignation, returning to it again and again, the chief consideration in his mind being the King's desire that it should be postponed till his return.

III

It was evident by the beginning of April that the King's wishes could not prevail. The Government had now carried on for six weeks without a Prime Minister, and the inconveniences and difficulties of that situation could not be prolonged. It was imperative that the new Government should be formed and the by-elections consequent upon ministerial appointments completed before April 27, the date for the reassembling of Parliament after the Easter recess. Campbell-Bannerman perhaps had a sentimental desire to die literally in harness, which may have tempted him to fall in with the King's wishes. He had given much thought, as he lay ill, to the inscription on his wife's grave, and he asked rather wistfully one day whether it would be quite correct to describe him as Prime Minister if he had resigned that office before his own time came to be laid beside her. But the doctors were now imperative that all responsibilities should be thrown off, and his own good sense told him that the situation could not be prolonged. Accordingly, when the King telegraphed on April 1 still expressing the hope that he would postpone his decision, he replied in a letter—painfully dictated in the presence of Dr. Burnet—warning His Majesty that there could be no further delay :—

Campbell-Bannerman to King Edward

10 Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W.,
April 1, 1908.

Sir,—When Your Majesty honoured me with a visit before leaving for Biarritz, Your Majesty was pleased to express a wish that the subject of my resignation should not be raised until Your Majesty's return ; and subsequently I received a gracious message to the effect that I should not think of resigning before Easter.

For some days it had seemed to me that the chances of my succumbing to this insidious disease, coming as it has done on the top of others of a very serious kind, were steadily increasing. But in the last two or three days there has been a tendency, I am thankful to say, in the other direction, and, although I have not

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908. yet had an opportunity of seeing Sir T. Barlow or any one else that Your Majesty might wish that I should consult before coming to so serious a conclusion, I fear it must fall upon myself to decide whether my state of health will permit of my continuing my most willing services in my duties to Your Majesty. I am not able, therefore, now to present any formal request, even if there may arise a necessity for doing so, to be relieved of my duties, but as I know all the grievous inconvenience which such a situation would cause to you, Sir, I am sending this letter beforehand in order to prepare Your Majesty for such a submission on my part.—I have, etc., H. CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN.

A postscript was added by his secretary, conveying the opinion of Dr. Bertram Dawson and Dr. Burnet, and some further observations from Sir Henry himself :—

The Prime Minister says this morning, 'I am conscious myself that the state of doubt and anxiety in which I am is most prejudicial to my health, and this to a large extent because I know how inconvenient and unpleasant the uncertainty of the position must be to His Majesty. I trust that in seeking to be relieved of my position, His Majesty will take into consideration my weakness, the great sense of responsibility which weighs upon me, and my anxiety as to the effect on public affairs of my continued inability to discharge the duties of my office.'

The King telegraphed on April 3, acquiescing in this decision :—

Have received your letter with sincere regret. Under the circumstances I have no alternative but to accept your resignation as I see that it would be a relief to your mind, and, I hope, help to improve your health, when once the strain and anxiety of your position is removed.

I shall, however, take no further steps with regard to your successor until I receive your formal submission, which I presume you will send by messenger.

I am writing by messenger leaving to-day.

EDWARD R.

The formal submission was signed at five the same afternoon. 'There 's the last kick,' he said with a smile, as he laid down his pen, adding, to cheer his secretary, who stood

by him, 'My dear fellow, I don't mind. I've been Prime Minister for longer than I deserve.'

The promised letter from the King was delivered on the 5th:—

King Edward to Campbell-Bannerman

BIARRITZ, *April* 3, 1908.

MY DEAR SIR HENRY,—It is with sincere regret that I learn from your letter of 1st inst. that it is your intention to place your resignation of the important and arduous post of Prime Minister in my hands.

Though I reluctantly agree to your wishes, I fully understand that the present state of your health renders it absolutely necessary that you should avoid all strain of the great amount of work which your high office entails upon you.

I shall of course take no steps in approaching a successor till I receive your formal submission of resignation.

I cannot conclude this letter without expressing my sincere regret that the intercourse we have had with one another ever since you became Prime Minister is at an end, as it has always been a great pleasure and satisfaction to me to do business with you at all times.

Most sincerely do I hope that now you have ceased to bear the heavy responsibility of your office, your health may daily improve and that you may look forward to some years of quiet and comfort.—Believe me, My dear Sir Henry, Yours very sincerely, EDWARD R.

To this he found strength to reply with what proved to be his last word to King Edward. 'I have received Your Majesty's letter, and am overwhelmed with a deep sense of gratitude for the consideration with which Your Majesty has been pleased to treat me, and for Your Majesty's most kind reference to the time during which it has been my privilege to serve Your Majesty as Prime Minister.'

His mind was relieved when this was done, but he continued to inquire anxiously about certain of his old friends, and what was likely to befall them in the inevitable reconstruction of the Ministry. It gave him great pleasure to learn that Mr. Asquith proposed to appoint Mr. Vaughan Nash as one of his private secretaries. He was greatly

CHAP. XXXVII. 1908.

attached to Mr. Nash, and rightly felt himself under a deep obligation to him both for his devoted attention in these days, and for his loyal and unsparing service to him during the previous nine years.

There were days when he still thought he might recover, and even spoke of what he would do in the autumn; other days when he felt convinced that he would die before night. At times he expressed a half-humorous embarrassment at lingering so long after so many farewells had been said. But he was gradually sinking, and the three doctors who met in consultation on the 10th could do nothing but relieve his last days. He suffered much from breathlessness, for which oxygen was prescribed, and had long periods of drowsiness and wandering, with occasional intervals in which he talked cheerfully to Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Nash. Public affairs seemed to have passed from his mind, and he took little interest in the comments on his resignation, which had been announced in the papers on April 6. But his mind at this time was much with his old friends and constituents of the Stirling Burghs, and one of the last acts was to dictate messages to them to be sent when the end came. After a period of unconsciousness he died on the morning of April 22.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONCLUSION

Funeral Service in Westminster Abbey—Burial at Meigle—Mr. Asquith's Tribute—Other Tributes—General Botha's Salute—Some Leading Characteristics—A Portrait that he recognised—His Belief in Liberalism—Its Application to South Africa—A Continuous and Consistent Policy—Sympathy with the Under-dog—Defects in Opposition—Catching the Public Imagination—A Revelation and its Consequences—Scottish and English Characteristics—Mr. Vaughan Nash's Appreciation—A Last Word.

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

A GREAT company representing all ranks and the whole official world assembled in Westminster Abbey on April 27 for the first part of the funeral service, which was conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of Westminster. The Prince of Wales (now King George) came to represent his father, and M. Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, was one of the principal mourners. The entire Cabinet and a great part of the House of Commons, including many political opponents, numerous eminent Free Churchmen, representatives of all the Dominions, and the Diplomatic Corps were gathered in the Choir, and the Nave and Transepts were filled to overflowing with the general public and representative Liberals from all parts of the country. The pall-bearers were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith), the Duke of Fife, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker, the Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Tweedmouth, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, Mr. Walter Long, Mr. John Sinclair, and Mr. Thomas Burt.[1]

After the service the simple procession passed from the

[1] A bust in red marble, 'heroic size,' the work of Mr. Paul Montford, was subsequently 'erected by Parliament' in the Abbey. It is situated at the north-west corner of the nave, not far from the west door.

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

Abbey to Euston Station, the streets being lined with dense crowds which showed every mark of affection and respect. On the following day (April 28) he was laid to rest by the side of his wife in Meigle Churchyard, a sorrowful crowd of his own people who had gathered from all parts of Scotland attending him to the grave. Above the grave, on the wall of the church, was afterwards fixed the stone tablet for which he himself had prepared the inscription. The Italian is from Tasso ('Gerusalemme Liberata,' Canto VII.), but he has changed one word, substituting 'cara' for 'antica.' In the original it is :—

> 'E la conduce ov' è l'antica moglie
> Che di conforme cor gli ha data il cielo.'

'And he led her to where was his aged wife who with heart at one with his had made heaven for him.'

The same day the House of Commons adjourned out of respect to his memory after a series of speeches in which the leaders of all parties paid their tribute to his qualities, whether as leader and friend, or as a straightforward and manly opponent. Mr. Asquith's speech was not merely a panegyric but a finely wrought study of character which must be given in full :—

Many of us, Sir, have come here fresh from the service in Westminster Abbey, where, amongst the monuments and memories of great men, the nation took its last farewell of all that was mortal in our late Prime Minister. Sir, there is not a man whom I am addressing now who does not feel that our tribute to the dead would be incomplete if this House, of which, by seniority, he was the father, and which for more than two years he has led, were not to offer to his memory to-day its own special mark of memory and affection. . . . It is within a few months of forty years since Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman took his seat in this Chamber. Mr. Gladstone had just entered upon his first Premiership in the plenitude of his powers and his authority. A new House, elected upon an extended suffrage, had brought to Westminster new men, new ideas—as some thought, a new era. Among the new-comers there were probably few, judged by the superficial tests that are commonly applied, who seemed less obviously destined than Mr. Campbell, as he then was, for ultimate leadership. There have been men

who, in the cruel phrase of the ancient historian, were universally judged to be fit for the highest place only until they attained and held it. Our late Prime Minister belonged to that rarer class whose fitness for such a place, until they attain and hold it, is never adequately understood. It is true that he reached office much earlier in his parliamentary career than is the case with most politicians. In successive Governments at the War Office, at the Admiralty, at the Irish Office, and at the War Office again, he rendered devoted and admirable, if little advertised, service to the State. It is no secret, and it is sufficient proof that he himself had no ambition for leadership, that when he was for the second time a Cabinet Minister, he aspired, Sir, to be seated in your Chair. But though he had too modest an estimate of himself to desire, and still less to seek, the first place in the State, it fell to him after years of much storm and stress by a title which no one disputed; and he filled it with an ever-growing recognition in all quarters of his unique qualifications. What was the secret of the hold which in these later days he unquestionably had on the admiration and affection of men of all parties and all creeds? If, as I think was the case, he was one of those men who require to be fully known to be justly measured, may I not say that the more we knew him, both followers and opponents, the more we became aware that on the moral as on the intellectual side he had endowments rare in themselves, still rarer in their combination? For example, he was singularly sensitive to human suffering and wrongdoing, delicate and even tender in his sympathies, always disposed to despise victories won in any sphere by mere brute force, an almost passionate lover of peace. And yet we have not seen in our time a man of greater courage—courage not of the defiant or aggressive type, but calm, patient, persistent, indomitable. Let me, Sir, recall another apparent contrast in his nature. In politics I think he may fairly be described as an idealist in aim and an optimist by temperament. Great causes appealed to him. He was not ashamed, even on the verge of old age, to see visions and to dream dreams. He had no misgivings as to the future of democracy. He had a single-minded and unquenchable faith in the unceasing progress and the growing unity of mankind. None the less in the selection of means, in the daily work of tilling the political field, in the choice of this man or that for some particular task, he showed not only that practical shrewdness which came to him from his Scottish ancestors, but the outlook, the detachment, the insight of a cultured citizen of the world. In truth, Mr. Speaker, that which gave him the authority and

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

affection, which, taken together, no one among his contemporaries enjoyed in an equal measure, was not one quality more than another, or any union of qualities; it was the man himself. He never put himself forward, yet no one had greater tenacity of purpose. He was the least cynical of mankind, but no one had a keener eye for the humours and ironies of the political situation. He was a strenuous and uncompromising fighter, but he harboured no resentments and was generous to a fault in appreciation of the work of others, whether friends or foes. He met both good and evil fortune with the same unclouded brow, the same unruffled temper, the same unshakable confidence in the justice and righteousness of his cause. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had hardly attained the highest place and made himself fully known, when a domestic trial, the saddest that can come to any of us, darkened his days and dealt what proved to be a fatal blow to his heart. But he never for a moment shirked his duty to the State. He laboured on—we here have seen it at close quarters—he laboured on under the strain of anxiety, and later under the maiming sense of a loss that was ever fresh, always ready to respond to every public demand. And, Sir, as we knew him here, so after he was stricken down in the midst of his work, a martyr, if ever there was one, to conscience and duty, so he continued to the end. I can never forget the last time that I was privileged to see him, almost on the eve of his resignation. His mind was clear, his interest in the affairs of the country and this House was undimmed; his talk was still lighted up by flashes of that homely and mellow wisdom which was peculiarly his own. Still more memorable and no less characteristic were the serene patience, the untroubled equanimity, the quiet trust with which during those long and weary days he awaited the call he knew was soon to come. He has gone to his rest, and to-day in this House, of which he was the senior and most honoured member, we may call a truce in the strife of parties while we remember our common loss and pay our united homage to a gracious and cherished memory:—

How happy is he born and taught
  That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
  And simple truth his utmost skill;

. . . . .

This man is freed from servile bands
  Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
  And, having nothing, yet hath all.

In Mr. Balfour's absence through illness, it fell to Mr. Akers-Douglas (now Lord Chilston) to speak for the Opposition, and he dwelt generously on the determination and courage with which the late Prime Minister held to his political convictions, and 'never flinched from opinions because they might be unpopular and never failed at the lowest ebb of the political tide or during the gloomiest period of his party's fortunes.' 'We honoured and loved him,' said Mr. T. P. O'Connor, speaking for the Irish, 'and regret his death as one of the greatest and heaviest losses that our people and our country ever sustained.' 'Nowhere,' said Mr. Arthur Henderson, 'is his loss more keenly felt than in the ranks of the Parliamentary Labour Party.'

A few other tributes outside the walls of Parliament may be briefly recorded. 'I have never,' said Mr. Lloyd George on the day of his death, 'met a great public figure who won so completely the attachment and affection of the men who came into contact with him. He was not merely admired and respected but absolutely loved by us all. The masses of the people of this country, especially the more unfortunate of them, have lost the best friend they ever had in a high place in this land. His sympathy with all suffering was really deep and unaffected. He was a great man, with a great head and a greater heart. He was absolutely the bravest man I ever met in politics. He was entirely free from fear and a man of supreme courage.' M. Clemenceau, then French Prime Minister, who came over specially from Paris, as he said, 'to place a wreath on the bier of a friend,' spoke of him as 'a great figure, a true Liberal, and a man who knew how to brave unpopularity when his convictions required him to do so.' General Botha cabled from South Africa :—

Have learned with deepest sorrow of the passing of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, in whom the Empire loses one of its wisest statesmen and the Transvaal one of its truest friends.

In securing self-government for the new Colonies, he not only raised an imperishable monument to himself, but through the

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

policy of trust he inspired the people of South Africa with a new feeling of hopefulness and co-operation.

In making it possible for the two races to live and work together harmoniously he has laid the foundation of a united South Africa.

Lord Morley has recorded[1] a scene which took place two years later :—

When the task [the union of South Africa] was finally accomplished, General Botha was in London, and, among other ceremonies, he invited the Cabinet to dine with him. The Prime Minister whose courage and persistency had carried the Union was now dead. No speeches were made. Only two toasts were proposed. After the health of the King had been drunk, General Botha rose and only said, 'To the memory of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.' With this high simplicity came to an end a long coil of storm and troubled things, in which both Campbell-Bannerman and Botha had played worthy parts, and we may well be grateful for an incident that does the sacred service of making our hearts feel the warmer for mankind.

'After years enough to test and justify the issue,' adds Lord Morley, 'another distinguished soldier on the same side in the fight said to an eminent assemblage in London : "I hope that when you draw up a calendar of empire-builders you will not forget the name of Campbell-Bannerman—a wise man with profound feeling and profound political instinct who achieved one of the wisest political settlements in the history of this country." '—(General Smuts, April 1917.)

II

These records of contemporary opinion are valuable, for when the necessary discount has been made for the language of eulogy appropriate to the occasion, the notes struck by all the eulogists have something in common which points to the truth. Friends and opponents in this case agree about the main outlines of the portrait. They present Campbell-Bannerman as a straight and stout-hearted man,

[1] *Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 145.

standing staunchly in all weathers for convictions that were deeply rooted in him. The story told in these volumes can do nothing but confirm this dominant impression. An intimate friend of his wife's relates that when she spoke of her husband, she had generally but one word to say of him: 'Henry is a good man, how good no one knows but myself.' His biographer can attest that from the beginning to the end of his life there is no record which shames that word, and none which would hurt his memory, if the whole of it were revealed.

But there have been many other good and straight men in public affairs who have done their day's work and passed from the scene, unremembered save by their friends. The interest of Campbell-Bannerman's career is to discover how a man who up to late middle-life was judged to be able and competent, but not of commanding quality or character, who had no striking oratorical gifts nor even readiness in debate, reached the first place by acclamation, and won one of the greatest popular triumphs in his generation. He had against him the most formidable fighting-man of his time in Mr. Chamberlain, and the most skilful Parliamentarian in Mr. Balfour; and on his flank, questioning his authority, were men who were greatly his superior in the parliamentary and platform arts. How did he come to prevail against them all? The conventional answer to this question is 'character'—character exemplified in hare and tortoise, with an edifying moral for the slow and steady. But the image ill fits a man who for years together seemed to have a unique capacity for kindling his opponents to wrath, who was perpetually nailing unpopular flags to his mast-head, who fought for anything that he conceived to be a principle with an aggressive tenacity that at times disconcerted his best friends. From the day when he became leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons to the day when he became Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman conceived himself as waging a perpetual warfare for the defence of the Liberal faith, and no one in that cause was readier with what is called the offensive-defensive.

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

There is a sentence in a letter written at the beginning of October 1905 in which he says that, 'making the necessary discount for the kindliness of the writer,' a certain article by Mr. H. W. Massingham which had appeared in the *Speaker* of the previous week (Sept. 23) contained more of what he hoped was the truth about himself than anything he had ever seen in print. Mr. Massingham had taken as his text the rumours then current that King Edward had shown special favour to 'C.-B.' at Marienbad, and, accepting this as a clear indication of where the King would look for his next Prime Minister, he wrote :—

As to the Liberal Premiership, it is no secret at all that the claims of the Leader in the Commons are now uncontested. No section seriously disputes them. A year or so ago no such feeling existed, and, indeed, the party was induced to look for another, and a very worthy solution, by the modest self-effacement of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. But it is seen now that no such sacrifice is required. The Ministry lies in ruins, overwhelmed with public and personal discredit. Neither Mr. Chamberlain nor Mr. Balfour, the two chief surviving figures of the combination of 1900, possesses any power of stimulating public opinion in his favour. The arrogant spirit of the war has died away, and the only man who had consistently represented the opposition to it, and on whom four-fifths of the work of criticism has fallen, has survived the foolish rancour of those times. . . . One knew how false the anti-'C.-B.' movement was. The man who was supposed to have traduced the Army was always popular with its best representatives ; and his personality, with its steadfastness, honourable simplicity of life, and remoteness from the vulgarly alluring side of English society, commanded in private the respect that the cowardice of party politicians denied to it in public while the irrational mood generated by an unsuccessful and muddled war remained, and sought scapegoats for the incapacity of its leaders.

. . . .

As for the Liberal Party, it has had no other figure consistently presented to it during the last five years as its champion against the powerful enemies who now lie at its feet. It could count on no other man for continuous service ; in the absence of Lord Spencer in the Peers, and the sunken condition of the party in the Upper House, it had no other rallying figure ; there was no

other bond between the rank and file and the authoritative councils of Liberalism. 'C.-B.' stood alone, because he was left alone, and every other candidate for the Premiership was disabled or disabled himself from the competition. He never sought the Leadership; it came to him through the voluntary withdrawal of the only other possible candidate. When it fell to him, there fell with it one of the hardest tasks that ever confronted an English statesman. No one who has not watched what 'C.-B.' had to endure in the House of Commons at the hands of two of its most insolent speakers and from a section of his own friends and followers can understand what the ordeal was. He has come out from it with greatly enhanced powers and authority, and with the field clear of rivals for whose removal he has never raised a finger.

Here was the portrait which, on the rare occasions on which he would consent to talk on that theme, he liked best to paint of himself—the portrait of a man who was without ambition, who had not striven for mastery or sought to displace any competitor, but who, being where he was, had served according to his lights and capacity. Over and over again he said just this simple thing to his constituents, and no one who knew him doubted for a moment that he meant it. I have more than once noted his cheerful submission of himself to various plans for relieving the party of the 'incubus'—as certain newspapers used to call him—when the interests of Free Trade seemed to require it; his scrupulous regard for the tradition that the leadership of the party in the House of Commons should not carry with it as of right the succession to the Prime Ministership; his repeated offers to serve under any Prime Minister who could be trusted to 'keep the doctrine.' These were not flourishes or poses or the crafty devices of a skilful politician to conquer by stooping, but the expressions of his real mind; and precisely because they were known to be honest they led to a deep determination in the mass of his followers that he should not be supplanted. The judgment of the House of Commons is seldom wrong, and the judgment which brought Campbell-Bannerman to power was first of all that of the rank and file in the House of

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

Commons, the judgment of the 'Centre,' the 'four-fifths' of sensible and steady men to whom he was always appealing against disturbers of the peace, whom he rallied to him in party-meeting at the most critical moment of his leadership, and whom he felt to be akin to him in their devotion to the essential thing above sections and groups which he called 'Liberalism.'

III

He was far from being insensitive, and, though he seldom said a word of complaint, there is no doubt that he felt keenly the ordeal to which he was subjected during the years of the South African War. But to support and sustain him he had all the belief of the Victorian Liberal in Liberalism as a definite body of doctrine which might temporarily be eclipsed, but which must surely triumph in the end if its adherents remained faithful to it. The politicians who were anathema to him were those who watered the doctrine to please some temporarily perverted public taste. He held the simple view of the party system that when the country wanted Toryism it would go to Tories for it, and when it wanted Liberalism it would expect the unadulterated article from a Liberal Party. For Liberals, therefore, to try to appease popular wrath by assimilating themselves to Tories when the country was against them was an unprincipled folly which would destroy their chance of being accepted as Liberals when the popular mood changed. This was the true faith of the old school—the faith which regarded coalitionism, opportunism, and all quivering and flinching before a temporary clamour as treason to the cause. No one held this faith more whole-heartedly than Campbell-Bannerman, and in applying it to the daily warfare of politics he was, as Mr. Lloyd George has said, the bravest of men.

This 'orthodox Liberalism' has been derided as a dull thing by the nimbler spirits of later days. But to the tribe of which Campbell-Bannerman was sealed, it was a light in the darkness, a test of present conduct, and a goal



SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

Full-length Monument at Stirling, by Mr. Paul Montford

Erected by Public Subscription, and Unveiled by Mr. Asquith on 1st November 1913

for the future. Always they asked, 'What has Liberalism to say about this? what would the great Liberals have done if they had been confronted with this emergency?' The answer not infrequently terrified the time-servers and vote-catchers who saw the popular tide racing in a quite different direction, but it was just then that the old Liberal stood firm, confident that in so doing he would best serve both his country and his party. CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

The limits within which an Opposition may pursue protest and criticism in time of war will be for ever a disputed question and can be fixed by no rigid rule, but Campbell-Bannerman's action in the South African War may be taken as a clear case of what a staunch Liberal of the old school conceived to be his duty. From the beginning his protest was practical. The Kruger ultimatum was in his view a calamity which a wiser statesmanship would have avoided, but the challenge having been thrown down, he did not doubt that it had to be taken up, or that the result would and must be the extinction of the dual system in South Africa through the annexation of the Boer States. So much had to be accepted, and in persuading his party to accept it he stood for a time almost alone between pro-Boers who thought the war an iniquity, and Liberal Imperialists who thought it just and inevitable but disclaimed annexation as its object. To Campbell-Bannerman it seemed one of the certainties that this conflict, having been once started, would go forward until the uniting of South Africa under one flag was an accomplished fact, and he did not think it to be the interest of the Dutch that there should be any less decisive result. Therefore he would not waste the Liberal effort on a vain protest against the inevitable and irremediable. But that ground being conceded, Liberalism, as he conceived it, recovered its freedom and its duty to work for peace and reconciliation; to protest against every unnecessary embitterment, to throw itself against the popular impulse which demanded vindictive penalties or unconditional surrender; to insist above all things that the promise of free institutions should

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

be given, and should be redeemed without subterfuge or evasion at the earliest possible moment. The South African War, he was never weary of saying, differed from all ordinary wars in that at the end of it the two combatants would have to live together as friends and neighbours under a free Government which they must both acknowledge. To keep this idea alive in the heat and passion of war, and to brave all unpopularity in resisting every tendency which might make an unappeasable feud out of the temporary quarrel, was thus, in his view, the positive duty of a Liberal; and he was impatient with any one calling himself Liberal who seemed to shirk it.

His thought on this subject was continuous and consistent. There were moments when he was criticised with equal asperity by both wings of his party, by the one for doing too little and by the other for doing outrageously too much. Through it all he held steadily to his idea that the cure for South Africa was not to go back on the past, but to apply the Liberal principle boldly and quickly to the present and future. Especially there was to be no half-way house set up between the military régime and full responsible self-government. Better even prolong the military régime than devise a sham constitution which the Boers would think to be a breach of faith, and which might easily become a barbed-wire entanglement of vested interests against free institutions. Seldom, I think, in the record of any statesman can there be established such a continuity of simple guiding ideas as may be found in Campbell-Bannerman's speeches and actions from the outbreak of the South African War down to the day in 1906 when the Transvaal Constitution received the sanction of the Crown. For once the popular judgment was not at fault when it attributed a great act of policy mainly to one man.

But with this devotion to Liberalism in the sense that the nineteenth-century Liberal understood it, he had all the modern Radical's sympathy with the under-dog. Again and again he pleaded for a constructive social policy which would grapple seriously with the evils of slums and

sweating and infantile mortality, and which, as he said in his first speech as Prime Minister, would make the land 'less of a pleasure-ground for the rich and more of a treasure-house for the nation.' Staunch Free Trader as he was, nothing would induce him to say that all was well with the country under Free Trade or to withdraw a word of what he had said about 'the underfed twelve millions' because it seemed to be a useful shot in Mr. Chamberlain's locker. That the underfed would be worse fed, if Mr. Chamberlain's proposals were adopted, seemed to him self-evident; but to deny that they were underfed and to turn the defence of Free Trade into a panegyric of conditions which ought to lie heavily on the conscience of the nation was, in his view, a sinning against the light. All suffering touched him deeply, and it was his vivid apprehension of the sufferings of women and children which brought the storm on his head in the South African War. With all his shrewdness and equability of temperament, his sympathies were always with the impulsive and warm-hearted when a wrong was to be redressed; and nothing alarmed him less than to be told that a supporter held extreme views.

In action his preference was always for the frontal attack. He listened with impatience to the schemes evolved by subtler brains for sapping, mining, and outflanking the positions of the enemy. Having made up his mind that the immunity of Trade Unions must be restored, he could see no merit in the indirect method by which lawyers proposed to attain that object. Having promised to 'find a way' of dealing with the House of Lords, he threw the whole weight of his influence against all schemes which seemed to him merely to walk round that question, while leaving the essential difficulty untouched. Superficially he seemed to be an easy-going man who, if left to himself, would never give trouble. But it was dangerous to presume on this. 'Just as one imagined,' writes his secretary, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, 'that he was inattentive, ready to take the line of least resistance or do nothing or yield, suddenly one came up against a rock, an obstinate determination, a

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908. perfectly clear and set conviction, which entirely upset every one's calculations. In consultation and deliberation, he would apparently inattentively allow others to discuss and elaborate details in a way which might obscure the main issue, and when by this method some might think that they were going to carry the particular point they wanted, C.-B. would suddenly rouse himself, detach from the discussion some unassailable and fundamental principle, and, casting aside the irrelevant side issues and accessories, press a view to which every one eventually yielded. It was the secret of his power. He could with an air of almost somnolent inattention detect the point that really signified. With a kindly, affable, and almost weak manner, there was underneath an adamantine strength of purpose and conviction.'

But though he had this essential quality of the leader, he was till quite the end of his life curiously lacking in certain other important accomplishments. It is impossible to say that the colleagues who wished him to go to the House of Lords in December 1905 were without serious justification. Even his best friends had at times to confess that he was a very unhandy man in the House of Commons. There were periods when, with all his shrewdness, he seemed to have developed a genius for saying the wrong thing. Often the keener spirits on the back benches had chafed at the loss of opportunities which he seemed to have missed through his slowness and lack of agility in debate. Members of the Government—or so it seemed—had treated him with a studied disrespect which he had been unable to resent. On his 'form' in Opposition it was by no means unreasonable to suggest that he might be unequal to the double burden of conducting the Government and leading the House of Commons in the new Parliament.

There never was in fact a more miraculous change in the 'form' of a public man than from Campbell-Bannerman as leader of Opposition to Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister. The election of 1906 revealed the fact that, in spite of all his parliamentary infirmities, he was the one man who counted in the country. Candidates were unanimous on

that point. He alone of the Liberal leaders had caught the imagination of the public; he more than any one else seemed in the public eye to be the representative spirit of the great Liberal uprising. That Liberals should support him and pledge themselves to follow his lead without swerving to right or left was everywhere the demand. His inherent modesty had prevented him from even thinking of himself in this light, and the discovery that he had behind him this immense volume of affectionate support seemed to make a new man of him and to invest him suddenly with power and authority. 'He exhibited in the new Parliament,' says Mr. Masterman, 'powers of eloquence and readiness of reply which he had never before revealed. The type-written notes were cast aside; he often indulged in impromptu utterances; his humour was unfailing; so was his good temper; so indeed was that initiative and ready grasp of a situation which gauges at once the tone and temper of an assembly of quick and intelligent minds. . . . The greater the challenge, the more he rose to the height of his opportunities. The vision had been foreseen of Sir H. C.-B., like Moses in the battle of the wilderness, with both his hands held up by nimbler and more agile intelligences on each side of him; his indiscretions glazed over, his frequent mistakes rectified. The actual facts revealed the Prime Minister standing alone, quite contentedly and placidly, leading the House without any external assistance whatever, so that it sometimes appeared as if he could have gone on in the absence of the whole of his Cabinet. He could make it laugh when he pleased; he could turn its attention to serious things; his personal appeal would settle the fate of divisions and turn the independents and recalcitrants from one lobby into the other.' Within six months of his becoming Prime Minister it was acknowledged on all hands that he was a master of Parliament, and his capacity in that respect was by none more handsomely and generously acknowledged than by those who had doubted it in December 1905.

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908.

IV

He was in many respects what a previous generation would have called 'an original.' His 'little ways' were a proverb; there was a quality in his speech and action which everybody noticed. His talk had pith and sap; he had a keen and whimsical eye for faults and frailties which led casual acquaintances to say that he was a cynic. This was very far from being the truth, but his character was not an open book. To the public he seemed a homely and simple man. Every one instinctively called him 'C.-B.', and a certain affectionate familiarity was part of his relation with the public, or rather of the public's relation with him. But it was frequently said that he had no intimate friend but his wife, and even those who knew him best had to admit that there was something baffling about him, something which in the end he always kept to himself. Others said frankly that he seemed always to have some mysterious joke at their expense. To a few old friends he opened himself a little after his wife's death, but to none of them did he say a word of his long vigils by her bedside or his torturing anxieties when the doctors had begun to break to him that she was beyond cure. None of them knew that for the first six months of his Prime Ministership, when —a man of seventy—he was bearing the heaviest of all public burdens, he had scarcely spent one continuous night in bed. Yet, if there was this baffling element in his character, there was nothing in it which was in the least degree crooked or devious. He had in the course of his career to inflict many disappointments on old friends and supporters, but none of them ever charged him with having tricked or deceived them. There was never any mistake about the boundaries or the main roads in his map of life. The first were fixed and immovable and the second lay straight and even, so far as human circumstances permitted, between their extreme points. The one sure prediction about him was that, whenever there was a choice, he would be for the simple, straight, and direct approach to any

given object. On his death-bed he said to an old friend, 'If people should say of me that I tried always to go straight there is perhaps no credit to me in that. It may have been mere indolence. The straight road always seemed to me the easiest.' Nevertheless he had a skill of his own in circumventing the minor difficulties, and would humour anybody if there was nothing important at stake. In this respect he was, as people said, both canny and pawky. A Scottish proverb which he frequently quoted was 'It is never aboot by the brig,' *anglice* 'The longest way round is the shortest way home.' A distinguished Scotsman, Sir Carlaw Martin, said of him after his death that 'he had in an uncommon degree the common qualities of his countrymen,' and he was undoubtedly above all things a Scot. He loved Scottish jokes and Scottish stories, and was never so much at home as among his own people. But he had many of the qualities—the strength and solidarity of character, the quietness and perseverance and 'wise indifference of the wise'—which Englishmen like to think characteristic of themselves.

Let me conclude this chapter with an estimate of his life and character by Mr. Vaughan Nash, who, as his private secretary from the year 1900 to his death, saw more of him in public and in private than any man now living. Mr. Nash writes :—

I have heard it related that shortly after Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became Prime Minister, a passenger on a Channel steamer, a Conservative politician who had not seen him for several years, noticed him standing on the bridge, and was thunderstruck by the change in his appearance. There was something about him, he said, which compelled his confidence. The change was undoubtedly marked, and one has only to compare the later with the earlier photographs (the portraits must, I am afraid, all be discarded) to notice it. The later photographs bring out the serene and noble lines of the face, with its expression of stoical endurance and just a glimmer of

laughter in the eyes. By the side of the earlier photographs they suggest the finished statue as compared with the rough model. Looking back over those times when all the packs were in full cry, no one would be surprised to find that the chase had left some disfiguring mark. But the face is neither that of a hunted nor of a victorious man. It is free from all trace of bitterness. And the face is a true index.

The ordeal of the years of the war and its aftermath was a heavy one. It is pleasant to contrast with its indignities and buffetings some of his later triumphs. One of these in *particular recurs to me, and may be worth preserving* as an epitome of the events of both periods and of his part in them. C.-B. is receiving his guests at a dinner to the Dominion Prime Ministers, and stands chatting with one of them, General Botha, by the door of the drawing-room at No. 10. Botha's eyes light up as he catches sight of the most commanding figure in the room, and the two move forward simultaneously with out-stretched hands, Kitchener beaming for once. Or glance at him in the House, any time from 1906 onwards. Facing the bench where for so many years he had sat in the stocks, he has the air of a man standing warming himself on his own hearth, with his family—'My flock' as he called them—about him, and you perceive that by some process of transfiguration he has become an Institution of whom the whole House is proud.

Yet if you open any old file of newspapers from the year 1899 onwards, with a very few exceptions you will find that C.-B. was the friend of every country but his own, a little-Englander dead to all sense of imperial responsibility, a defamer of the Army, a sitter on the fence. There were statesmen who delicately hinted that the vileness of his views might after all be due in some degree to the meanness of his intelligence. A man, you gather from the leading articles, not worth powder and shot, but nevertheless a centre of national contamination deserving every kind of execration if only to make it clear to other countries that he was not speaking for his own. But, after all, the situation being what it was and C.-B. being what he was and incapable of being anything else, it was bound to be so. He knew what the price would be and did not complain when it had to be paid.

Then came the second murky period when hopes of a new Party grouping under brilliant leadership were dashed by the obstinacy of Campbell-Bannerman, who would take no hand in any attempt to transmute the South African adventure into the basis of a glittering Imperialist policy. Liberal Imperialism could in the

nature of things make no appeal to him; indeed, if there was one thing more than another that he detested it was the kind of conception implied by this formula. In the same way he was roused to wrath by somebody's proposal, with a considerable backing behind it, to erect a Victory Arch in Pall Mall. This monumental piece of ineptitude made him furious, and he used to declare that his wife and he would emigrate if anything came of it. If, in these lines, one dwells on him in Opposition rather than in power, it is because the qualities he displayed in holding fast against all odds were Campbell-Bannerman's supreme contribution to his time.

He was called to, and, up to a point, supported in the leadership of his party, largely, I suppose, on account of his more obvious qualities, his amiability, his zest in life, his interest in his fellow-beings, his gaiety and gift of humour, his powers of judgment, and his innate sense of diplomacy. Here were all the qualifications of the conciliator and peacemaker, but underneath lay a vein of iron stubbornness, a native attachment to principle, that made him incapable of playing the part of opportunist or temporiser. Till his principles were threatened C.-B. was pre-eminently the 'good fellow,' but, when the challenge came, the element of adamant in the easy-going temperament gradually became discernible even to the dullest eye. There was another strand in his composition, not perhaps so generally noticed, of which account must be taken. I mean his inbred fastidiousness. He would have disliked being called a humanitarian; he was certainly no sentimentalist, but what he regarded as odious could by no exercise of words or pressure of party arguments be made sufficiently sweet-smelling for him to endure. In its essence the stand he made was that of the plain man who values decent living and decent manners and who instinctively carries into affairs his habitual personal code of conduct, taste, and honour. Equipped as he was, the fates might hammer, but the anvil on which events were shaped was equal to its purpose.

He had one answer to the assaults of his critics and the complaints of his friends (not that he often uttered it)—that a man had no choice but to do his duty as he saw it. His was an old-fashioned and whole-hearted belief in duty, and with him, as with the Duke of Wellington, whom on occasion he would call in aid, it was an animating principle and no mere code of conduct. He spoke sometimes with misgiving of the failure to teach and practise this saving virtue.

CHAP. XXXVIII. 1908. With all this he enjoyed one quality of the born fighter in a highly-developed form—he was a good hater. His positive beliefs could indeed be ascertained with fair precision from the terms of the commination service which, during the dark days, he would freely and frequently recite. The 'fellows' who figured in it possessed the characteristics which he loathed—bombast, powers of sophistication, love of intrigue, deviousness, and so on. Against straightforward, honest fighters, however hard their blows, he had no complaint, but 'those fellows' who were hard at it coining *réclame* as patriots on the strength of the war ramp he could not stomach.

The gods, moreover, had lavished on him a gift of laughter, which contributed in a degree that can hardly be put too high to keep him going, when that part of the world that was not howling at him was deriding him. One recalls C.-B. and his wife shaking with laughter over some small absurdity, the antics of the dog Zuli, the mistakes of a servant, the reconnaissances of persons bringing olive branches, and, at a later stage, when the sun was coming out, the gingerly advances of former opponents. One can see him, as plainly as if it happened yesterday, with his clear and candid gaze, letting fly a whiff from the inner fires at something that one of 'those fellows' had been saying, and then, as the ridiculousness of the particular fellow's remarks or pretensions struck him, the shout of laughter.

So the strands were composed and intertwined by which, in spite of all the strain and buffetings, the task of holding on was accomplished. His courage was of a close-fitting quality that neither public anxiety nor private grief or ill-health could shake. Patience and endurance he had learned in the school of public life, but a courage which was at command in the most disheartening times, when the wreckage seemed complete and old friends held aloof, this was the supreme gift. It was sustained, as those who were nearest him knew best, not only by his stubborn indomitable character, and his loyalty to principles, but by a belief in the qualities of his countrymen, Scottish and English, so intense and abiding as to enable him to possess his soul against the day when the dust and hubbub subsided and the 'decent, plain folk' of England were themselves again.

. . . .

The duty of a biographer is not to force his own views on the reader, but to provide the material on which the reader may form his own opinion. Yet one abiding im-

pression may be recorded. No man was ever more of a democrat and less of a demagogue than Campbell-Bannerman, and if there is anything that may be learnt from his example, it is that a man may still in this country save his life by losing it, and win popular applause and affection by bravely resisting the tumults and excitements of the hour. Of all the arts of manipulating opinion, currying favour with newspapers, trimming sails to the popular breeze, he was wholly innocent. Right or wrong he never had his ears to the ground, or could be turned from a course in which his convictions were engaged by the fear of the polling-booth.

Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium ardor prava jubentium
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida.

If there is any man in the recent history of the country to whom these words seem appropriate or who, without claiming any of the heroic virtues, quietly and modestly lived up to them, it was Campbell-Bannerman.

INDEX